

FOR GOD AND COUNTRY

THE WAR DIARY OF
LIEUTENANT COMMANDER JOHN P. FOLEY, S.J., NAVY CHAPLAIN
1942–1945



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COVER

Sunday, February 7, 1943. Fr. John Foley beside a dugout at the edge of Henderson Field's "Fighter 2" runway on Guadalcanal. The residents of the dugout, whom Foley refers to on the back of this photo as "The guys at the end of the runway," are "John Kerr, son of Mrs. Mary Kerr" of Newton, Massachusetts, and "William Walters, son of Bessie Walters" of Medford, Massachusetts. Foley doesn't note which is

which. He frequently recorded domestic contact information for servicemen he met so he could write and report that they were well. He wrote many condolence letters as well. [See page 83.] When Catholic men had received Holy Communion prior to their deaths, he took particular care to tell this to the survivors.

Photo credit: Foley family.

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Introduction

A MAN FOR ALL SEASONS. REV. JOHN P. FOLEY, S.J. WAS BORN ON JUNE 6, 1904 IN MOTHERWELL, SCOTLAND, OF IRISH PARENTS WHO EMIGRATED TO THE UNITED STATES WHEN HE WAS SIX WEEKS OLD. HE GREW UP IN SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS, JUST OUTSIDE OF BOSTON. AND AFTER GRADUATING FROM BOSTON COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL AT THE AGE OF NINETEEN, HE ENTERED THE SOCIETY OF JESUS, COMMONLY KNOWN AS THE JESUITS, ON AUGUST 14, 1923, TO BEGIN A THIRTEEN YEAR COURSE OF STUDY AND SPIRITUAL FORMATION THAT LED TO HIS ORDINATION TO THE PRIESTHOOD IN 1936. AS PART OF HIS TRAINING HE STUDIED AT HEYTHROP COLLEGE, IN ENGLAND, WHERE HE EARNED A BACHELOR'S DEGREE IN CLASSICAL STUDIES. HE WAS LATER AWARDED A MASTER'S DEGREE IN CLASSICS AT BOSTON COLLEGE.



Along the way he gave evidence of gifts of capable leadership that led to his appointment in 1939 as Dean of Admissions and Assistant Dean of Freshmen and Sophomores at Boston College. On December 8, 1941, a day after the Japanese attack on Pearl

Harbor, Fr. Foley volunteered for service as a Chaplain in the United States military. One of his favorite quotes from Horace: “*Cras ingens iterabimus aequor*” came to life. “Tomorrow we set out on the enormous ocean.”

He was commissioned as a Lieutenant (j.g.) in the Navy on February 22, 1942; promoted to Lieutenant on March 1, 1942 and to Lieutenant Commander on October 3, 1945. From the day he began his assignment to Chaplain’s School in Norfolk, Virginia, on April 15, 1942, until he was discharged on October 7, 1945, he kept a diary of his experiences as a Navy Chaplain assigned to warships, first on the USS *George Clymer*, an attack ship and troop carrier, and then on the USS *Vella Gulf*, an aircraft carrier. He

seems to have kept the diary for the benefit of family and particularly his mother, who was widowed when Foley, the oldest of eight children, was a teenager, and for his sister Catherine, to whom he was particularly close. The diary includes details that would have been of particular interest to members of his family, particularly his visits with his brother Edward, 12 years his junior, who was also serving in the South Pacific, and his practice of making the Stations Of the Cross in memory of his father at each church he visited, whether in Wellington, New Zealand, or at a mission station on one of the Solomon Islands.

But his central focus, as captured in the diary, was the war he witnessed. A keen observer whose Roman collar allowed him access to places, on board and on land, normally closed to men of his rank, Fr. Foley took careful notes of the horrors and heroism, and the young men he served, comforted and buried—and they were of all faiths; the Navy could only staff one chaplain on a ship that might be carrying 3,000 men. He also wrote about the nature of war propoganda, the difficulty of holding religious services under dangerous and distracting condi-

Introduction (continued)

tions, and the people he met over the course of three years at sea. And his humor, his personal warmth and generosity, his intellectual curiosity, his love of the natural world, his keen appreciation for human character, wherever he found it, as well as his priestly example, high principles, and his affection for and devotion to the young men—though not a great deal younger than him—for whom he served as minister, surrogate father, and counselor, come across clearly. Although after his return to civilian life he could never read enough about World War II and adorned his room at St. Mary's Hall with photographs from the war, he rarely spoke about his years in the Navy unless he was questioned. As one of his fellow Jesuits said, "He was too much of a gentleman to dominate a conversation with endless tales of his experiences, and indeed it is very difficult to share such experiences with people who have never had them."

Fr. Foley returned to Boston College after the war and resumed for the next five years his position as Dean of Admissions and Assistant Dean of Freshmen and Sophomores. During that time he had

his secretaries type up his war journals, and a copy found its way to the archives of the New England Jesuit Province. In 1951 he was selected to serve as principal of Boston College High School and in 1955 as Rector at Cheverus High School in Portland, Maine, and then in 1961 as the first Rector at Xavier High School in Concord, Massachusetts. In 1968, at 64 years of age, Fr. Foley began a new career that lasted 27 years, giving the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, mostly to women religious in the United States, Canada, England, Ireland, Scotland, Italy and Malta.

In 1994 Fr. Foley received a diagnosis of terminal cancer. He maintained a cheerful spirit and a genuine interest in others as he prepared to "set out on the enormous ocean" that leads to the shores of eternal life with the good Lord he served so long and so well. "Home is the sailor, home from the sea."

John. P. Foley, SJ, died on October 21, 1995, at age 91, and is interred at the Jesuit cemetery in Weston, Massachusetts.

Chaplains' School

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 15, 1942

Bade farewell to family, several of whom saw me off on the midnight train out of [Boston's] South Station for Philadelphia.¹

THURSDAY, APRIL 16, 1942

7:30 A.M.—Arrived in Philadelphia. After struggling into my clothes in the Pullman upper berth, I discovered that my new life as a Naval Chaplain with collar and tie was starting inauspiciously. I began the day by losing a collar button.²

8:30 A.M.—Celebrated Mass at St. Joseph's Church in Willings Alley, the oldest Church in Philadelphia. Fr. [Leo H.] O'Hare, S.J. was a princely host. Called home.³

11:10 A.M.—Took the train for Norfolk, Virginia via Delaware, splitting the State down the middle with a ride to the tip of Cape St. Charles (Chesapeake Bay).

No sooner was I settled in my seat than a man of about 42, with a splendid physique, maneuvered down the aisle with a pronounced list to starboard. He spotted the Chaplain's cross and greeted me like a long-lost friend, a soldier in World War I. "Hi, Chaplain!"

His life history followed. The conductor came along, to whom the drunk said, "Hey look at that rank," pointing to my gold braid, Lieut. j.g. "I'd shoot the Gospel for a rank like that." Then he wandered off down the aisle, war-whooping "Deep in the Heart of Texas." Then back to me, now writing, with the conductor. "Look at that, writing about me. He'll use me in a sermon. This is what he'll say: 'My dear brethren, once I was riding on a train down to Norfolk, Virginia from Philly and on that rain was a man who was a drunkard. He had been dissipating for three days.'" Then he sailed off down the aisle again, singing his song, "Deep in the Heart of

¹ Born in Scotland, Foley was raised in the Boston metropolitan area, the oldest of eight children of Irish immigrant parents, Francis and Catherine. Francis died when Foley was a young man. Diary keeping, it should be noted, was a practice forbidden to American officers and enlisted men for fear the documents would fall into enemy hands and provide useful intelligence. Foley's diary, which he wrote for his family in the event he did not return, seems particularly problematic, with notes on ship movements, "scuttlebutt," personnel, morale, and military installations that could well have been of some interest to German or Japanese military intelligence. Shortly after Foley enlisted, Navy Secretary Frank Knox issued a general communique that began: "The keeping of personal diaries by personnel of the Navy is hereby prohibited for the duration of the war. Personnel having diaries in their possession are directed to destroy them immediately." Foley makes no reference to this order in his diary, and writes about openly making entries in a notebook as he went about his duties aboard ship.

² Originally assigned to the Army, Foley convinced his Jesuit superiors to see to it that he was appointed to the Navy. In a March 3, 1995 interview with Steve O'Brien, then a history doctoral candidate at Boston College, Foley notes "having learned to swim in salt water at eight years old and liking the ocean and living next door to it and having taken a voyage [to England, for his Jesuit studies] . . . I had salt in my veins. It had to be the Navy." O'Brien's thesis, based on Foley's diary, was published as *Blackrobe in Blue: The Naval Chaplaincy of John P. Foley, S.J. 1942–1946* (iuniverse 2002).

³ Founded in 1733 by Joseph Greaton, an English Jesuit, Old St. Joseph's, as it's referred to, is the oldest Catholic Church in Philadelphia. A wall plaque in the church pays tribute to William Penn (1644–1718), who founded the colony of Pennsylvania in 1687. Penn died in 1718. In 1701, as the colony's "first proprietor," granted religious toleration. The plaque reads "When in 1733 / St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church / was founded and / Dedicated to the Guardian of the Holy Family / it was the only place / in the entire English speaking world / where public celebration of / the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass / was permitted by law."

Texas.” Another song of his was “Hey, Screwball, Screwbowski.”

4:30 P.M.—Boarded a ship with the melodious name of Virginia Lee at Cape Charles, Delaware, for a 2½ hour sail down Chesapeake Bay, touching in for a few minutes at Old Point Comfort, Virginia.

7:30 P.M.—Landed at Norfolk and put up at Hotel Monticello for \$3.00 a night. No facilities of any kind; just a room — and what a room!⁴ I called the nearest pastor, Fr. Blackburn of St. Mary’s Church, who graciously granted me permission to celebrate Mass there in the morning. At 8:20 P.M. I checked in at N.O.B. [Naval Operating Base] to the Duty Staff Officer.⁵

FRIDAY, APRIL 17, 1942

8:00 A.M.—Celebrated Mass at St. Mary’s.⁶

9:00 A.M.—Off to the Naval Base where I reported to Commander [Captain Clinton. A.] Neyman and Lt. [John F.] Robinson.⁷ Our Chaplains’ School begins on Monday, April 20,

and lasts six weeks, followed by two weeks of field work. Classes are held in the Chaplains’ Building. A story told by the lecturer, P. Robinson: “Admiral Pratt states that all men eventually reach the metallic age—get silver in their hair, gold in their teeth and lead in their stern.”

Went for lunch in the Officers’ Mess and purchased a \$5.00 book of food tickets. All colored help.⁸

A young naval aviator, a 1940 Harvard graduate, was killed today. Also today, a German sub surfaced two miles off Norfolk, either by accident or design. Our shore guns pounded it to pieces. Twenty-nine were dead from concussions; five Germans survived. They were attended by Fr. [Wilbur] Wheeler who remarked, “Just boys.”

SATURDAY, APRIL 18, 1942

Again celebrated Mass at St. Mary’s.

Mrs. Hagan, 524 Warren Crescent, called up Mrs. Cecilia A. Taylor, 4107 Gosnold Avenue, sister of Fr. Tom Delihant, S.J., Park Avenue, New York

⁴ The six-story, twin-towered Monticello Hotel opened in 1898 and was for many years said to be the most elegant hotel in the South. It closed in 1970.

⁵ The Norfolk Naval Operating Base, to which Foley was assigned, was the headquarters of the Atlantic Fleet during World War II.

⁶ Unless noting an early morning call to battle stations, nearly every entry in Foley’s diary begins with a reference to celebrating Mass.

⁷ Neyman, a Joliet, Illinois, native who had just founded the Navy chaplain’s “indoctrination” school at the service’s request, was a Northern Baptist. Robinson was a diocesan priest from New York City. Assigned to the Marines, he would die of injuries received in an airplane accident in Virginia on February 23, 1945, one of 24 Navy chaplains who were killed during the war. It’s recorded that a scribbled note was found tucked into his belt: “Dear Mom and Pop, I have had time to say my prayers.” Foley graduated in Class E, the school’s fifth class. Among the 14 trainees were six Catholics, three Baptists, two Episcopalians, and one Lutheran, Presbyterian, and Congregationalist. In addition to learning practical military matters and attending classes in physical fitness (not a favorite pastime for Foley), prospective Navy chaplains learned how to conduct a burial at sea or “rig” a church service on a ship deck. Moreover, they were taught to minister to all on board—few ships carried more than one chaplain—and to organize “general” religious services for men of varied denominations and faiths. Protestant and Jewish chaplains, for example, learned how to lead the rosary and recite Catholic prayers for the dying. Chaplains also received introductions to a range of theologies and were ordered to respect theological differences and avoid religion-based quarrels, a practice the Army and Navy carefully referred to as “cooperation without compromise.” Foley records no quarrels among chaplains in his diary. He himself appears to have been easy in his relationships with other chaplains (see entry under May 25, 1942), and generous in his ministry, offering counseling, comfort, and prayer where it was requested or needed.

⁸ In 1942, Norfolk, like many southern cities, operated under Jim Crow law. Segregated schools, restaurants, rest rooms, and residential neighborhoods were the rule. The Armed Forces were segregated as well. They were not formally freed of discrimination “on the basis of race, color, religion or national origin” until July 1948, under an executive order signed by President Harry Truman.

City, a lovely and loveable grandmother who lives alone. She gave me the best upstairs room in her eight-room house.⁹

SUNDAY, APRIL 19, 1942

11:30 A.M.—Celebrated Mass at St. Mary’s Church in Norfolk. In the small cemetery between the rectory and the Church, there is the following striking epitaph on three sides of a tombstone: “In memory of Heloise Lepage, wife of Wm. S. Camp, who died December 4, 1842, aged 25 years. Devoted in her conjugal attachment with ardent affection, kind, gentle and dutiful, she was all that could be desired—the cherished object of parental fondness and the joy and delight of numerous relatives and friends. Her sudden and untimely end filled many fond hearts with keen anguish, mingled with high and holy hope, that her rare virtues had commended her to the favor of heaven.”

MONDAY, APRIL 20, 1942

First day of Chaplains’ School. The day began with a lecture by Chaplain Neyman and ended with drill and a physical in Drill Hall. Almost had a blackout after one anti-tetanus inoculation.

TUESDAY, APRIL 21, 1942

Second day of Chaplains’ School. There were two lectures; one on pay and the second on naval etiquette.

5:00 P.M.—While I was standing near the Marine sentry at the entrance to the Base, a colored man came running along, showing his pass for exit. The Marine said, “See those railroad tracks? Go back to

them and walk out. Nobody runs out of here.” The Negro turned without a word and meekly did as he was told. Then, as soon as outside the gate, he bolted again; he wanted to catch a car for home. The color line is rigid here; streetcars, trains, pay stations, toilets.

The Naval Base is just boiling with activity. Ten thousand rookies are cleared through each seven weeks: a) Air Station; b) Naval Operating Base; c) Training Station.

The teachers in the Chaplains’ School were Commander Neyman, an Episcopalian; Commander [Stanton W.] Salisbury, a Presbyterian; and Lieutenant Robinson, a Catholic. Salisbury to Robinson, “Converted a boy to the true Church today.” “What Church?” “Yours, of course.”¹⁰

There are 125 priests in our class “E”, and, God save the mark, [James W.] Kelly from Memphis, Tennessee, a hard-shelled Baptist!

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 22, 1942

Happy surprise today. Bernard Nice, a freshman at Boston College two years ago, who left at the end of that year because of financial difficulties, called at Chaplains’ School about eleven o’clock. He was the first Boston College man I met.¹¹

There were two lectures this afternoon. The first by Fr. Hughes, Chaplain on the USS Enterprise.¹² Aircraft blasted Marshall Island [on February 21, 1942], which was under attack for 13 hours. One bomber fouled up going off the flight deck and was left to its

⁹ Foley sometimes recorded full home addresses in his diary, likely so he could later write to people he met. As the chaplain for nearly two years on a ship, the USS *George Clymer*, that carried infantrymen and marines to beach landings in Northern Africa and the South Pacific, he sometimes wrote to parents or wives to let them know that their sons or husbands had died with courage and, in the case of Catholics, that they had received Communion prior to their deaths. For an example of such a letter, see entry for May 5, 1943.

¹⁰ Like Foley, Salisbury would serve in the Pacific Theater during the war; in 1949 he would be named a vice admiral and head of the Navy chaplaincy.

¹¹ Nice, a submarine spotter, would not return to Boston College but served in the Navy until he retired. He became a high school teacher and died in 1969 in St. Paul, Minnesota.

¹² The aircraft carrier USS *Enterprise* would survive the Pearl Harbor attack and receive 20 battle stars for service in the Pacific Theater. Decommissioned in 1947, she remains the most decorated ship in Navy history.

fate. The second lecture was by Chaplain Salisbury who was at Pearl Harbor on the Island of Oahu on December 7. “Why caught with pants down?” The aircraft carrier, USS Enterprise, [was] reported off shore. It was usual for the line of planes to come in first from our carriers. So when the line came in, even though they were Japs, they were allowed to come in scot free!

THURSDAY, APRIL 23, 1942

An officer informed us today that German subs can be heard signaling to each other off shore. In the afternoon we made a tour of inspection of the Wyoming and Arkansas, worlds in themselves with sick bay, wardrobe room, bakery, kitchen, soda fountain. Both of these ships were located in the Portsmouth, Virginia, Navy Yard across Chesapeake Bay, a place humming with activity with ships being reconditioned, guns remounted, whole signal systems overhauled and getting scraped from stem to stern. Heard one sailor say to another as we passed by, “There are the ‘Come to Jesus boys.’”

FRIDAY, APRIL 24, 1942

Chaplain Salisbury told us today that Retired Admiral Taussig had a run-in with a young Assistant Secretary of the Navy during World War I. They crossed swords and the Assistant came off second best. Later that Assistant became President. Taussig prophesied that war with Japan was inevitable. President Roosevelt cashiered this brilliant tactician.¹³

There have been reports lately of bombing of Tokyo. [The bombing took place on April 18.] Chaplain Salisbury told us that move was the direct personal inspiration of the President, although other Navy heads opposed it. Hence the Army did the job off the Navy carrier, USS Hornet.

SATURDAY, APRIL 25, 1942

On a streetcar in Norfolk I said “Hello” to a sailor from Louisiana. “Chaplain, Sir?” “That’s right.”

“Are you Catholic or non-Catholic?” “Guess.” “Well, you’re from the North; not many Catholics there. Priests are either Polish or Italian, so I guess you’re non-Catholic.”

SUNDAY, APRIL 26, 1942

Third Sunday after Easter. I drove out by car to the Naval Air Station for two Masses at 7:30 and 8:45. The chapels were packed (125) for both Masses. It gave me a thrill to hear the prayers at Mass and at the end of Mass being said by the strong, vibrant voices of the young men who are defending the things that we value most. After Mass, Bill Martin, a Boston College freshman last year, came in and introduced himself. He is now an instructor in radio mathematics. During Mass all kinds of planes—four-motored bombers, scouts, flight training—were taking off and landing regularly. Noise from them and from washing machines gave sharp competition for attention to what the celebrant preached on.

Three men lost in crashes at our Station today.

After lunch today in Hotel Monticello, Fr. Fred Gallagher and I drove through the Negro section of Norfolk. You have seen the last word in clothing when you have seen a Negro or Negress walking along Church Street in his or her Sunday best on a sunny Sunday afternoon. They are animated rainbows. Women — weirdest combinations of red and green and yellow and blue; young bucks — pancake hats, trousers tight at the ankles, bags at the knees.

MONDAY APRIL 27, 1942

Went back to the Naval Air Station. On the outskirts of the baseball field, I saw naval air barracks beyond right field; a field hangar beyond center; and beyond left, a landing field for 20 four-motored bombers.

TUESDAY, APRIL 28, 1942

Attended regular morning classes. Later, with Fr. [Frederick A.] Gallagher, visited the USS Alcoa, a repair ship, and a destroyer, USS Herbert.

¹³ Rear Admiral Joseph Tausig was retired in 1941 on account of his age. He did in fact predict the war with Japan. He was reappointed to the Navy in 1943, serving in an administrative capacity, and died in 1947.

Men moved out today on the USS Indiana. Depth charges on the destroyer may be set at any depth from 50 to 350 feet. A sailor told us that they cruised from Norfolk down to Kittery Point, spending five days out and two days in.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 29, 1942

Met two English sailors looking into a jewelry store window. One boy, from London, had not seen [England] for two years. The other, Donnelly, a Catholic, was from Liverpool. He remarked that every church in his home city was “bombed down.”

THURSDAY, APRIL 30, 1942

Regular lectures this morning. This afternoon ten of us took a trip in a Douglas Transport, (first in the formation), to Elizabeth City, North Carolina.¹⁴ As we headed for the stairway leading into the plane, Rev. Kelly, the Baptist from Memphis, remarked to me, “Wall ah can appreciate now the celibacy of the clergy. You don’t have to worry about your wife and child.”

After we got inside the plane, an enlisted man instructed us to tie safety belts around us while taking off and landing. Meanwhile, two pilots were tuning up the engines. In a jiffy they were roaring out their deep tones; yet, strangely enough, we could enjoy conversation by lifting the voice volume slightly.

The cabin of the plane was quite bare. It had aluminum seats running down each side with a safety belt and a parachute in each. We first tested the former and then donned the chutes.

As we looked out the cabin windows, we could see the propellers spinning their thousand-odd revolutions a minute and the enlisted man piloting the cockpit men out onto the main take-off lane of the airport. A PBY [Patrol Bomber] was taking off just ahead of us on its 20 to 30 hour tour of duty. Gracefully, it soared up, and almost immediately we

swung onto the main stem, turned around and the pilots gave her the gun. We ran down for a mile and then gradually and slowly our big ship, a giant silver swallow in the afternoon sun, swung up and out over Elizabeth River. The Naval Operating Base was laid out in perfect pattern on our left. Down over the river we flew at 175 per hour, and took in the constantly changing panorama underneath us. Here a new housing development was all spruced up — fresh blue, green and red roofs; there a farm of oil tanks tried to merge with the background, their tops painted grass green. Off to our right, smoke was belching from three tankers moving out of Hampton Roads for a life or death trip down the coast for another load of black, liquid gold.

All the time, our pilots were talking with the Operations Tower. After two miles down stream, communications were broken and we were on our own.

A young doctor from the Naval Air Station was our first casualty. He and his dinner parted company. Soon Rev. Kelly was in difficulty. The chicken salad started sending messages to the potato chips that we had had three hours before at the Officers’ Mess.

After a while, I stepped forward into the cockpit. The two pilots were conversing in a tone slightly higher than conversation level. The cockpit was a maze of clocks; I counted 28 of them. The two pilots, former commercial fliers, were conversing about trips they had made.

Far below, the panorama was constantly changing; the horizon in back of us fading as the one ahead opened out. The channels of the rivers could be made out very easily. An ensign along with us remarked that a blimp could spot a sub 90 feet below the surface.

Within half an hour, we arrived at Elizabeth City [North Carolina]. We landed gracefully, as easily

¹⁴ The plane was likely a C-47 Skytrain, which was used as a personnel transport during the war. Elizabeth City was the site of an important shipyard, a Naval station, and a Coast Guard station.

as on a sofa. Bombers, heading out for a 20 or 30 hours cruise with 14 men aboard and hot loads of live bombs, were taking off alongside of us.

FRIDAY, MAY 1, 1942

Dinner this evening was in the “Old Southern Grill” where the following motto framed on the wall intrigued me:

“A wise old owl sat on an oak.

The more he heard, the less he spoke;

The less he spoke, the more he heard.

Why not be like that wise old bird?”

The scene is Blessed Sacrament Church. Two stalwart young boys, 22 years old, were making an evening visit at 7:30. The warm glow of the setting sun flooded through the amber-stained glass window bathing both boys in gold as they knelt before their Captain and King. They are strong in faith and brave in war.

SATURDAY, MAY 2, 1942

11:30—We took off in a Douglas Transport plane for Cherry Point, North Carolina, on a glorious sun-drenched morning. With a roar, our giant silver plane soared up and we are on our way to our destination. Thirty-five hundred feet below is a crazy quilt of farm land, river woods and doll houses. On our left is James River carrying fussy little tugs on its bosom. The tugs chugging along tried to make up in braggadocio what they lacked in size as they warped an aircraft carrier into her berth.

Soon we were sailing through the Alps in the sky. Some were dark mountains at the base and at the top crested with snow. Occasionally, a tuft of cotton would sail by, boastfully, on its own after cutting its mother’s apron strings. Then a proud craft would move along majestically, obviously an old-timer.

Far below, white strips of yellow adhesive tape crisscross the face of the country. Occasionally they would meet and little black tugs came to a stop at their juncture. An enlisted man informs Chaplain Weise and me that the body of water we are passing

over now is Albemarle Sound. Soon we have left that behind and we are flying over Pamlico River. Now a haze obscures the ground, a misty reminder of forest fires that carelessness or sabotage have lighted in the Carolina woods.

At the end of an hour, we land at Cherry Point, North Carolina [site of a Marine Corps airfield], and disembark on a three mile runway, the longest in the country. This camp is in the pioneer stages. There are only 1000 men here, a combination of Army, Navy and Marine Corps. I sleep in the temporary quarters of 22 Naval fliers in an enlisted men’s barracks while their own is being built. One of them falls into conversation and speaks of his Commanding Officer, Commander [John] Yoho. “He never asks us to do anything that he hasn’t done himself. Not all COs are like that, Chaplain. He is up for every patrol.” “You like him then?” “Like him? Why every one of us would fly to death for that man.”

On the way down to mess an hour later, the assignments were up for the next day, Sunday. Dawn Patrol, Noon and Dusk Patrols. The first name under Dawn Patrol was Yoho, C O.¹⁵

SUNDAY, MAY 3, 1942

4:30 A.M.—Both men on either side of me are routed out of bed by an enlisted man for their dawn patrol. These men keep the subs under from Cape Lookout to Cape Hatteras. All are splendid young men, college grads, e.g., Anderson, Dartmouth; Grace, same.

In the Marine Barracks there is one of the men with the Bible open on the bed. “Read it every single day, Sir,” he says. I was drumming up trade at the time, announcing the time of Mass on the morrow.

In the Officers Wardroom, Commanding Officer Yoho says, “I want to prepare whichever one of you gentlemen is the Protestant for a poor attendance tomorrow. Catholic boys turn out but not the Protestant.” [Methodist Chaplain John W.] Weise says, “Well, I guess I can take it.”

¹⁵ Yoho would die in January 1943 in the crash of a training flight he was piloting.

At Mass in the morning there are 105 by actual count. Six Communion at the nine o'clock Mass; those boys fasted until eleven o'clock for their meal. Their faith is living.

Took off at 4 o'clock. Although 175 per hour was the only indication of our speed, our own shadows were racing across the farms and rivers and the forests below. Like Charlie McCarthy, it mowed everything down.¹⁶

WEDNESDAY, MAY 6, 1942

10:30 A.M. – Visited the aircraft carrier, USS Charger, formerly the South American luxury liner, Rio de Plaza, that weighs 15,000 tons with a flight deck, hangar deck and below deck quarters. With openness and airiness, it is different than the line's other ships. On the flight deck I saw how planes are suddenly stopped as a little jeep was testing the operating gear.

The plane alights, having let down a hook; across the deck are half a dozen cables, stretching the width of the deck and spaced out about ten yards apart. These cables are released, shoot up, catch the hook of the plane and suddenly check it. Similar to running into a clothesline in the dark.

THURSDAY, MAY 7, 1942

Received a letter today from Fr. John Long, S.J., in which he stated that he has the [Boston College] President's permission to volunteer for Chaplaincy.¹⁷

A lecture on Psychiatry was given by Lt. Levine, 28 years old. He reduced human personality to the resultant of two determining factors—heredity and

environment. Question by yours truly, "Any room allowed for the exercise of free will in that analysis?" His reply, "I don't know what you mean by free will." "You have a choice of two alternatives—to walk or to ride in a car." Finally, after another priest, Fr. [Michael] Doody, and a minister, Mr. [Will-Mathis] Dunn, peppered him also, he admitted free will in practice but not in theory.

SATURDAY, MAY 9, 1942

Went to Barracks "B" and visited survivors recently brought in from a torpedoed ship. The ten American sailors were members of a gun crew aboard the British steamer, Irma, that was sent to the bottom on Good Friday, 350 miles off the coast of South Africa. There was one Catholic among them – Thomas Caddigan of 77 Granite Street, Biddeford, Maine. They were drifting for four hours before they were picked up. A British Corvette with them at the time of the torpedoing scooted away and returned four hours later to rescue them. They were bitter about what they called its desertion.¹⁸

SUNDAY, MAY 10, 1942

It being Mother's Day, I sent my mother some flowers and called her on the phone.

At 6:30 I heard confessions for an hour in the Base Chapel. It was most edifying to see the large number of blue-jackets receiving Communion for their mothers whether they were at home with their families or at home in heaven with God, Our Lord and His Mother.

¹⁶ "So help me, I'll mow you down!" was a phrase "spoken" by the puppet "Charlie McCarthy" on ventriloquist Edgar Bergen's "The Edgar Bergen-Charlie McCarthy Show," a radio staple from 1937 to 1957.

¹⁷ Because Jesuits generally held wide-ranging responsibilities in civilian life—Foley held three administrative titles at Boston College—those who wanted to enter the military chaplaincy sometimes found it difficult to obtain permission from their superiors. John Long, who had succeeded Foley at Boston College, became an Army chaplain, serving until 1956. He served as a dean at the College of the Holy Cross and then at Boston College. He died in 1964.

¹⁸ A good example of some of the minor errors that crept into Foley's diary, likely on account of his relying on memory and testimony rendered from within the general "fog of war." The ship torpedoed by U-Boat 505 in the Atlantic off the coast of Mali on Good Friday, April 3, was the West Irma (the Irma was, in fact, a German vessel), and was an American, not British, cargo ship. The ship that rescued 99 American sailors was the HMS *Copinsay*. U-505 later surrendered to the American Navy and was gifted to the Chicago Museum of Commerce and Industry, where it remains on exhibit.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 13, 1942

Gasoline rationing went into effect yesterday for our car. That “our” is not quite accurate. Mr. Hagan, host of Fathers Gallagher and Doody, has lent them the use of his two-door Ford for the duration of our stay in Norfolk. When Fr. Doody appeared for his ration card yesterday, he was restricted to the three-gallon ration like everybody else. This morning Chaplain Kelly informed me that he had secured one of the cards marked “X” which do not limit the amount of gas which may be obtained. Last night a regulation was set up exempting all ministers from the ration. I passed the word along to Fr. Doody this morning. Fr. Doody, “Mike” to all his fellow students in the Chaplains’ School, was a Jesuit Chaplain with an Irish face – open, expansive, with the corners of his mouth always turned up in a smile – even a split-second before an explosion. Acting on the disturbing information, he drove over to the Base Office that handed him his limited card yesterday, inquired about the possibility of getting an unlimited card and wound up being deprived of his three gallons a week because his borrowed car was not properly registered. He came back to the Chaplains’ School, told his tale of woe and was greeted with gales of laughter instead of the sympathy he expected. During the afternoon, he turned the Base Office over on its keel and finally secured a card entitling him, like all the other Chaplains, to an unlimited supply of gasoline.

This morning I was on my way back to the School after paying a visit to the Chapel. To return to the School, one had to pass the Negro detention unit. Inside were the boots [recent recruits] of two or three weeks’ experience. Outside the cyclone fence a gang detail of twelve more colored youngsters, fresh from the train and bus, dressed in all the colors of the rainbow, marched by in charge of a Negro boot. As they passed, one of the boys inside the fence

sang out to them, “Yea, man, you had a good home and you left it. Oh, what you done!”

THURSDAY, MAY 14, 1942

This morning the Chaplains visited the USS Wakefield, formerly the luxury liner, USS Manhattan of the United States Lines, a 30,000 tonner now converted into a transport. She had just returned from a five and a half month voyage. They took Canadians and Englishmen, Suffolk and Wessex men, to Singapore—4500 of them. As one of the young sailors put it, “We delivered them safely to the Japs.”¹⁹ This ship was hit by five bombs, direct hits, suffered the loss of 30 men killed and a smaller number wounded. She is now taking on stores for another trip.

At noon today I looked up Chester Gladchuk, a B.C. graduate of 1941, now in the [chief petty officer] division. Both tickled to see each other. Chet is still the salt of the earth; goes to Mass every morning in the Catholic Chapel. He likes the life but hopes to get a transfer to the anti-aircraft battalion.²⁰

SATURDAY, MAY 16, 1942

7:30—All the Protestant Chaplains in groups D & E of the School attended Mass in the Chapel of Our Lady of Victory on the Base. At the end of Mass the Catholic Chaplains filed over to the Protestant Chapel with their non-Catholic brethren. There the head of the School, Chaplain Neyman, showed us how he runs services on Sunday. Prayers, hymns and a sermon comprise the program. After the service, a Presbyterian, Chaplain [Paul C.] Edgar remarked to me that he was as much mystified by that Protestant service as by the Catholic. He said his was entirely different. “It is ridiculous when you come to think of it. There we were, Protestant ministers of every denomination, each with his own brand of service, whereas no matter where you go, you priests always and everywhere have the same Mass.”

¹⁹ The disastrous Fall of Singapore to the Japanese, in February 1942, resulted in the surrender of 80,000 British and Commonwealth troops.

²⁰ A Naval lieutenant when he was discharged, Gladchuk had been an All-American football player at Boston College and would spend seven years playing for the New York Giants in the National Football League. He died in 1967, following a career as an athletics administrator at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

SUNDAY, MAY 24, 1942

Flew down from Norfolk to Elizabeth City, North Carolina, to celebrate Mass at the Coast Guard Station there. Commander Burke, a splendid Catholic, was in charge. The plane was a Beechcraft that covered the fifty miles in 22 minutes.

Elizabeth is the taking-off place for England. Our men fly the big bombers here from the Coast, then the Limeys take over. There they fill their airships with, above all things!!, ladies' silk stockings, cosmetics, onions and lemons. Their wives are tickled to get all these for this is what they lack in England.

Elizabeth City, with a population of 12,000 people, has 40 Catholics. The arrival of Catholic officers at this station with their families boosted the number to 100.

MONDAY, MAY 25, 1942

Mr. [Kermit S.] Combs, a [Baptist] minister from West Virginia, a member of our class, expounded his conviction today that since the body is the temple of the Holy Ghost and liquor is poison, then anybody who drinks liquor of any kind is polluting the temple of the Holy Ghost. In the group listening to him were two other ministers and yours truly. [Benjamin B.] Brown, an Episcopalian, explained his position that all creatures were created by God either directly or indirectly. Liquor was one of the creatures, therefore it couldn't be evil in itself. Good, sound doctrine. I inquired of Combs how he could explain the miracle at Cana when Christ Our Lord changed water into wine at the wedding breakfast. "Well," was his answer, "first of all, I wasn't there. Secondly, there was only a little liquor in the work performed by Christ." Brown popped up this time, "Then your position is ruined if there was any alcoholic content to the wine." Combs answered that difficulty by saying that in the communion service in his church, all difficulty was avoided by using grape juice.

TUESDAY, MAY 26, 1942

On a ship, Chaplain Neyman once heard a crowd of sailors in a working party outside his door swearing their heads off. He was on his way out when he heard one of the Chief Petty Officers censure the boys by saying, "G-d ---- it. Haven't you any respect for the Chaplain?"

WEDNESDAY, MAY 27, 1942

Visited the destroyer, USS Benson, built at Fore River [in Quincy, Massachusetts] three years ago. In the crews' quarters one sailor was sleeping directly over a box of TNT explosives. Twined around his bedspring was a pair of Our Lady's Rosary.

At the physical drill today, planes as usual were coming in to alight just about 50 feet over our heads as we went through the Gene Tunney exercises. The new men in the "F" group of Chaplains found it a bit disconcerting. The rest of us who had witnessed and heard the same for six weeks were not surprised at their reaction. Theirs was ours at the beginning.²¹

THURSDAY, MAY 28, 1942

As we toured a light cruiser today, there was evidence on all sides that these sailors have taken the zipper off their courage.

Read Fr. [William] Maguire's book, *Rig for Church* [Macmillan, 1942], the story of his 25 years in the Navy. Intensely interesting and most readable. In it he tells of the sanctity one finds in the Navy. One young man, a machinist's mate, came to him to tell him he wanted to be a Trappist. He had schooled himself to wake up in the middle of the night to say his Rosary. He is in the Trappist monastery today in Kentucky.²²

FRIDAY, MAY 29, 1942

The three ingredients of success according to Chaplain Salisbury, a good Presbyterian:

²¹ Tunney, the retired heavyweight boxing champion, had been commissioned a Navy captain and charged with developing physical fitness programs within the service.

²² Captain Maguire, who was awarded the Navy Cross for his work rescuing sailors during World War I, was the senior chaplain for the Pacific Theater during World War II. He is best known for his book, *The Captain Wears A Cross*, in which he describes his experiences during the Japanese raid on Pearl Harbor.

- i) Grace—God will give you that in abundance;
- ii) Knowledge—that I have done my best;
- iii) Common sense—“If you haven’t this, then neither God nor man can help you.”

SATURDAY, MAY 30, 1942

A street scene. In the evening on Monticello Avenue in the downtown section of Norfolk, a blind street singer is playing his guitar and singing. Sailors strolling along singly and in pairs are dropping coins into his tin cup. Sailors are proverbially generous.

SUNDAY, MAY 31, 1942

Telephone call at 5:30 from the Base. Chaplain Robinson calling for me to offer Mass on the battleship North Carolina, anchored two miles out in Hampton Roads. Took the seven o’clock boat from Pier 2 that was bringing back the liberty party of Saturday night. Like going out to a ship anchored off Boston’s Castle Island.²³ Beautiful sunny morning. Hopped up the accommodation ladder, saluted the flag and the Officer of the Deck. Heard confessions in the library until 0815, then celebrated Mass at 0830 in one of the mess compartments. About 130 were present. Flags took the place of stained glass windows and a whitewashed overhead²⁴ for a beautiful ceiling, but I’m sure that Our Lord was immensely pleased with the shining faces of those splendid young men. John J. McLoughlin of 254 Market St., Brighton, Mass., played the organ while the men sang lustily. An example of zeal: McLoughlin ran two classes aboard that ship which had no Catholic Chaplain, one for boys who wished to learn how to serve Mass and the other for non-Catholics who wished to know something about the Catholic Church. About ten officers formed the congregation in the first row. Among them was Bill Kelly, B.C. ’40, who escorted me around the ship after Mass. A ship magnificently appointed, with a wardroom of hotel spaciousness, spick and span from stem to stern, a superb man-of-war, ready for the best and the worst. I had to decline an invitation for breakfast and make a

getaway for Mass at noon in the Sacred Heart Church, Norfolk; made it without trouble. A beautiful church with a high nave and long transepts.

Today I met Bill O’Brien whom I had as a sophomore at Holy Cross [College]. Now a doctor, he is a Lieutenant (j.g.).²⁵

TUESDAY, JUNE 2, 1942

Yesterday began the field work of the Chaplains’ course. I am assigned to Fr. Robinson’s office. He is the Catholic attached to the lecturing staff at the School.

THURSDAY, JUNE 4, 1942

Learned today that [Congregationalist minister [Donald A.] Sterling, Kelly and Fr. [Charles J.] Covert are assigned to the Base here as chaplains. They are the first men from our class to be notified of their appointments. Meanwhile, the rest of us are on the tiptoe of expectation, wondering where our billets will be. Shall we be assigned to ship or shore duty? May the Lord deliver me from being an office boy for some senior chaplain. Close, immediate contact with the men is what I wish and opportunities to administer the Sacraments.

FRIDAY, JUNE 5, 1942

Editorial in the Norfolk Ledger-Dispatch on John Barrymore’s death expressed regret for the amusement that he furnished during the last years of his life, when he was burlesquing himself. As the editorial put it, “It was tragic to see him sliding down the banister of his own reputation. Let us think of him as he was when he was the number one Shakespearean actor of the stage.”

SATURDAY, JUNE 6, 1942

Thirty-eight years old today. Greetings and remembrances from mother and family and Sister Flavius did not let me forget the anniversary.

²³ A public park beside Boston Harbor.

²⁴ Underside of the deck.

²⁵ “Junior Grade,” equivalent to the rank of first lieutenant in the Army.

This afternoon I set out for Portsmouth where I am to take the weekend place of Fr. Creviston, Catholic Chaplain, who is on leave for his retreat. Met Chaplain Huske, non-Catholic, who was gracious and hospitable. Billeted in Ward A-2 for the night. Heard confessions in the Red Cross building in which the recreation hall and the Chaplain's office are located from 4 to 5:30. In the evening attended "Hullabaloo," a Hollywood-sponsored, travelling USO show, made up of dancers, acrobats, jugglers, jokesters and roller-skaters. A good professional show that lasted for an hour and a half.

In the ship's service store I met Schoonhover, 1 cl. fireman, 14 years in the Navy, a convert. Drank like a fish for five years until he met "the" girl who converted him and "Dried me up," he said.

SUNDAY, JUNE 7, 1942

Up at 0530; Confessions at 0600 in the Recreation Hall. Mass at 0630 with 200 present and about 20 Communions. Taxied down to the Navy Yard. Confessions at 0830 in the Yard Chapel; Mass at 0900 with 225 attending. Mrs. Pearson, a charming 55 year-old lady and grandmother three times over, played hymns such as "Mother Dear, O Pray for Me," "Star of the Sea," etc., on the chimes of the beautiful Yard Chapel shortly before the 0900 Mass, the bells reminding the men that Mass was about to begin.

After Mass, Bill Connelly, a B.C. graduate, came into the sacristy. I had met him two weeks ago on Granby St., Norfolk. Since then he has been down to Panama, helping to give Wallie Cuenin and 7900 other Marines a good start to New Zealand. He invited me to dinner aboard his ship, the USS Woolsey. At the 1000 Mass in the theatre of the Marine barracks, with 30 in attendance, there was a dim-out throughout with only the low lights of a movie theatre light-

ing the hall. Footlights blinded the preacher when he turned around to read the Gospel!

1205—Started for the USS Woolsey. At Pier 4 I boarded the first destroyer tied up, the Lansdowne that was about to leave when an ensign hailed me—a Bill Dunn from Holy Cross '35, for one year, then to Annapolis, who wished to be remembered particularly to Fr. Barrett. He came from Troy, N.Y. Bill remarked that I had been in the Navy some time judging from the sermon that I had delivered. "What do you mean?" "Well, expressions that only a Navy man would use, e.g., lashed ourselves to our ideals, everything squared away, etc."

Left the Lansdowne and went to the Woolsey where I was greeted by Bill Connelly. We had dinner in the wardroom; excellent roast duck with all the fixings, topped off by ice cream. Stayed about two hours. I was sent across the Elizabeth River in one of the boats of the ship and so ended another eventful weekend.

MONDAY, JUNE 8, 1942

At 1100 today I learned that I was assigned to the USS George Clymer, an attack naval transport. The news means that I am going to the far off places of the globe—with American boys. May God always be with us as we go down to the sea in our ship!²⁶

TUESDAY, JUNE 9, 1942

Last Saturday while in the Chaplain's Office at the Naval Hospital, Portsmouth, a young Marine approached me to state that his brother had to be back at New River within two days because his outfit was pulling out. However, he didn't have sufficient fare in cash. Although he had a check for \$20, he could not get it cashed. This boy said he and his brother were identical twins and had never been separated until now when he had been detached to the hospital because of an

²⁶ The *Clymer*, on which Foley would spend 21 months in two theaters of war, was close to 500 feet long and could carry 1,300 troops and 2,300 tons of cargo. Her crew numbered some 600 and she could cruise at better than 18 knots. Her armament comprised eight anti-aircraft cannons, four .50 caliber machine guns, and four .50 caliber guns capable of firing at targets on the sea or in the air. During the war she acquired the nicknames Greasy George and Lucky George, the latter because while frequently in battle zones she was only once struck by a shell, bomb or torpedo. (A shell damaged her communications antenna.) She served in Korea and Vietnam accruing 13 battle stars before being decommissioned in October 1967.

epileptic fit that he took at New River. I gave him \$5 cash to cover the emergency and prevent his brother from being tossed in the brig. My first investment of cash in the Navy. I didn't bother to get the boy's name. Today I received the \$5. and the following letter:

NORFOLK NAVAL HOSPITAL

Dear Sir:

Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Sincerely,

(signed) Pvt. Harold R. Hartin

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 10, 1942

In Norfolk (population about 200,000) there are 217 churches by actual count in the telephone directory. 6 Catholic; 7 Jewish; 204 Protestant (45 Baptist; 20 Methodist; 14 Presbyterian; 10 Episcopal; and the rest, assorted varieties).

Dinner Grace (à la Navy): "Dear Lord, bless this our food and meat / And please hurry up and give us something to eat."

FRIDAY, JUNE 12, 1942

Graduation of our Chaplains Class

Speakers: Paul Edgar, Fred Gallagher, Captain Mack, Chaplain Neyman.

Graduates: Paul Edgar, Fred Gallagher, Ben Brown, Bill Lumpkin, Glyn Jones, Ansgar Sovik, Donald Sterling, James Kelly, Fred Gehring, Henry (Cy) Rotrige, Charles (Chuck) Covert and John P. Foley.

Dinner in the Officers' Mess. Mrs. Hagan and Mrs. Taylor were guests.

SATURDAY, JUNE 13, 1942

When leaving the base, Fred Gallagher lost his way. Suddenly, we found ourselves riding down one of the vital roads of the airport. Quick as a flash three guards stepped out upon us, one with his pistol cocked, and challenged us: "Who goes there?" Both of us were so petrified that we could say nothing. As

the sentry advanced ominously, I found my voice and cried out "Officers." "Advance and give the countersign." Being ignorant of that, we simply sat and waited until he came abreast of us, with the pistol still pointed up in the air, fortunately. He smiled when we told him we were a couple of priests who had lost their bearings. He set us on our course again.

SUNDAY, JUNE 14, 1942

Celebrated Mass at Oceana, Virginia. One hundred at Mass with five Communions.

MONDAY, JUNE 15, 1942

Detached at 1200.

5:15—Sailed up Chesapeake Bay with Fred Gallagher, Washington bound.

TUESDAY, JUNE 16, 1942

Took the Colonial out of Washington for Boston; arrived at 8:15 P.M. On leave until June 25th when I pick up the George Clymer at Charleston, South Carolina.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 24, 1942

Took the Colonial out of South Station after celebrating Mass at St. Clement's Church with family in attendance. Goodbye to all. When shall we be together again?²⁷

On the Colonial I had dinner with Dr. Bowen, a former B.C. professor. Arrived in Washington at 7:30 P.M., one hour late. Then caught the train for North Charleston at 8:15 P.M.; dumped out from the Miami Special at 5:30 A.M. in North Charleston, nine miles from Charleston. Said Mass in Sacred Heart Church. The Pastor, Fr. Wolfe was a most gracious host. Went to the Navy Yard and met Chaplain Sitler. The ship was moored to the dock when I boarded her at about 4:00 P.M. Stepped aboard with my heart beating fast, for "my" ship was in.

USS George Clymer. Principal dimensions: Length—489 feet; Height—70 feet; Tonnage—16,730 (full

²⁷ St. Clement's was the Foley family's parish church, in Medford, Massachusetts,

load displacement),—233. The ship was originally the African Planet of the American South African Line, built by the Ingalls Shipbuilding Co. of Birmingham, Alabama, at their Pascagoula, Mississippi Yard. She is one of triplets; the others being the African Comet and the African Meteor. Now as the USS George Clymer, she has 33 officers and 314 men, with 400 more expected. She came up from her birthplace without an escort, was chased by three subs, but her speed enabled her to outdistance them. Lt. Crawford on duty one night of a full moon thought it would never set. Lt. MacRae said that

during the five-day trip up the officers had only five hours sleep. He, as Communications Officer, identifies himself to the other ships of ours that were met. He said that there are special signals which change within three hours. Before a ship signals, she has her guns trained on you!

What kind of a ship is she now? An attack naval transport, a member of the Amphibious Combat Force, with 32 landing boats and accommodations for 2000 troops. Captain A. T. Moen, Commanding Officer; Commander M.C. Erwin, Executive Officer.

Anchors Aweigh

SUNDAY, JUNE 28, 1942

For the first time—Mass at 0900. Attendance: 20; Communion—3; Confessions—10. Plan of the Day reads: 0830—Chaplain Foley will hold Confessions in Troop Commander’s Stateroom. Church Call. Divine services on board. Protestant services will be held in the Yard as noted below. Men desiring to attend will be permitted to do so.

Young enlisted man cried yesterday when told that I was a Catholic priest. He said that he had been praying since he heard that a Chaplain was coming aboard and that he would be Catholic.

Charleston, a Southern city, that is damp, with soggy tropical heat. Intermittently the clouds spill out their loads without warning. One street will be drenched; the next will be as dry as a match. Fr. Wolfe took me all around the city. I saw old slave trading posts, an old French Huguenot church de-christianized with no altar and only a cold pulpit in its place. Today no congregation; just a museum for tourists to visit and pay their respects.

A sailor beside me in a drugstore said, “Sometimes as you walk along the streets in a strange city and see the nice homes, warm lights on, you feel like walking up, ringing the doorbell and asking if they would mind if you came in and sat down on a sofa for a little while.”

I buy the Atlanta Journal at the hotel stand. Its byline: “Covers Dixie like the dew.”

MONDAY, JUNE 29, 1942

The HMS Ilex is tied up in dry-dock just behind us.

Philipps, an English able-bodied seaman on guard duty, said her back was broken by dive bombers in the Mediterranean. He had just received word that his mother was going blind.

2130—Down in the engine room, I met one of the men on duty at the generator with the temperature 105. He says two Rosaries every time he stands his four-hour watch.

TUESDAY, JUNE 30, 1942

0900—Off to the city jail to handle the case of Sayvitch, A. S., in prison for appropriation of a car without permission and for careless and reckless driving. Arrived at the dingy Charleston City Jail and identified myself. The boy, who had been drinking, was brought out. The owner of the car parked it; then five minutes later it was missing. Sayvitch’s story, “A stranger in beer parlor offered to lend him his car for \$10.; he beat him down to \$5. First thing he knew an officer forced him over to the side of the road.” The owner, officer and self went over to the Magistrate’s Court. Judge Matthews presiding. The square room was coming apart at the seams. A white and colored line of flotsam and jetsam queued up outside it. Judge was trying a case of a colored man accused of molesting people in a house with a knife at midnight. Judge: “Understand me distinctly. If you so much as set foot inside that house again, I’ll send you under the bridge. You will go under the bridge. Do you hear?”

They took us into a small anteroom. In the meantime the owner has been persuaded not to press charges of misappropriation. Judge informed the boy of the seriousness of the offense and told him

that the next time “the church would be closed and the parson and the sexton have gone home.”

Back to the police station where the charge of careless and reckless driving was filed. The boy was held in bond of \$5 on this and told to forget about appearance in court on the morrow. “You’re a lucky boy,” said the officer in charge of the court. “Marine in here the other day for the same offense was held in bail of \$5000.”

THURSDAY, JULY 2, 1942

Appointed as Mess Caterer. That means that I am in charge of the mess for the Officers and of the keeping of the Officers’ rooms and Troop Officers’ mess and staterooms.

One of the boys remarked that it was a good addition to have a priest on board on our ship for she was a suicide scow, i.e., red-hot invasion ship.

SATURDAY, JULY 4, 1942

Vignettes of Charleston.

- Gas station with black hoods over tops of its two pumps and the following sign:
RATIONITIS – NO GAS
- Most of the houses look as though they have been running away from paint for years. Simply put a house up and let the elements beat the outside boards into a dull, dirty brown. Negro hovels are just that. God never intended either man or beast to live in what they dwell. Slats thrown together on the worst sites, next to railroads or gas tanks, on the swampiest land. All huts built on stilts. Constant daily rains soon make what passes for yards or streets between hovels a quagmire. Youngsters, coal black, splashing around in the mud present a pitiful sight.
- Crepe myrtle bushes and palmettos fringe the streets. All growth a lush, tropical green. No matter how fair the day in the morning, somewhere along the line, clouds come along in

massed array, thunderheads among them on the growl, and spill their cargo and mutter away with their unspent fury.

- Number of Catholics on board: 60 enlisted men; 5 officers.
- Navy man’s life described in three “Ss”: sea, ship and sky.
- Charleston Negro dialect: “draft questionnaire” and “that is a worryation to me.”

Captain Moen called for a conference of all Officers and censured those guilty among the Department Heads for breach of confidence. He had informed them the previous day that we would be sailing shortly. Within two hours it was brought back to him. “I’ll be damned if I will stand for that. I tell you that if that happens again, I’ll have a general court martial on that officer.” Wound up his talk by saying that “Ours not to reason why but ours to do or die.”

Had dinner with Fr. Bob Sheridan, S.J., B.C. High, at the Overseas Depot and Replacement Center.

Negro soldier is pushed to the back of the bus from his seat up forward. “Good enough to stop a bullet but not to ride up front in a bus,” I inform the driver, who didn’t like my observation one bit.

SUNDAY, JULY 5, 1942

Mass in Troop Officers’ Mess. Sunday was a regular work day.

SATURDAY, JULY 11, 1942

An incident that gives rise to race riots. On bus returning to the Navy Yard from the city were two white men, about 25 years old, sitting in a seat behind me. A Negro, who had taken too much, tried to sit down beside me. No objections from this quarter. Two white men: “Push him off, Captain! Hey, nigger, don’t you know where you belong? Get down in the back of this bus.” Opposite were sitting two young bucks about 22. In the back of them, half a dozen more bucks. As the two white men got off at their stop, I looked at them going out through the

rear door. The second of the two punched one of the Negroes sitting in the seat by the exit, in the back. Then they were off through the door. At the next stop six of the Negroes jumped off, and bolted back for the white men. I doubt whether either one of them could recognize his face the next morning.

SUNDAY, JULY 12, 1942

Mass in the Troop Officers' Wardroom.

Had Fr. Henry F. Wolfe, Pastor of Sacred Heart Church, Charleston, and Fr. Lee of Worcester as my dinner guests aboard ship this evening.

I met Carver, one of our Clymer crew, on the way to Church. He is a devout non-Catholic. Talking about swearing and recalling when he had used a vulgar, indecent or obscene word or phrase. "I've been in the Navy for five and a half months and in all that time I have never said anything that I wouldn't have said before my mother."

TUESDAY, JULY 14, 1942

USS Clymer undocked this morning about 10:30. Fussy little tugs came chugging alongside of her about 9:30, making quite a fuss with their whistles, as if saying, "We may be small; you may be big, 16,000 tons, but this is a job that requires us to bring you safely without mishap into that dry dock over there. Don't forget that good things come done up in small packages." After the lines were pulled aboard, they pulled us out gradually into midstream. When we were apparently going too fast, they would slow us up by putting on full speed, snuggling up right under our hull and pushing with might and main. Coasted gradually into dry-dock, which, when it was drained, revealed hundreds of catfish caught ashore. Negro women collected them in baskets.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 15, 1942

Appointed Education Officer.

THURSDAY, JULY 16, 1942

Appointed Insurance Agent aboard ship, also. The jobs are multiplying like rabbits.²⁸

SUNDAY, JULY 19, 1942

Confessions at 0830; Mass in Troop Officers' Wardroom at 0900. Thirty at Mass with five Communions.

On Sunday afternoon took the bus out to Folley Beach for a swim. The water was glorious; stayed in it off and on from 1430 until 1945 with the sun beating down all day. The whole shoreline is fringed with palms; mile after mile of beach stretched away with hard sand making an ideal roadway for the cars that drove up, backed in and unloaded their passengers. Next morning's paper said the official temperature for today was 101!!!

TUESDAY, JULY 21, 1942

First instruction to Norman Middleton, Hospital Apprentice, who intends to marry Marie Burns of Philadelphia. Used "Why Six Instructions? Arranging for a Mixed Marriage," by Bishop Schlarman of Peoria. (B. Herder Book Co., 15-17 So. Broadway St. Louis, Mo.)

On Tuesday afternoon knocked off about 1630, went down to Meeting St., took a bus for the Isle of Palms where I swam until 1930. Beach of golden sand, nine miles long, with just a handful of cottages along isolated sections of it.

THURSDAY, JULY 23, 1942

Walk through the oldest section of Charleston. Interest awakened in books by a sign in the front window of an old, old house, "Books - Old and New - For Sale." Entered by the front porch that faces south as do all Charleston houses, for the prevailing breeze is from that direction. Lovely old lady rented front

²⁸ It was not unusual for chaplains aboard ship to be asked to handle an array of responsibilities no other officer wanted to manage. In addition to Insurance Agent—selling life insurance to soldiers and sailors; some \$3 million worth of it, Foley would recall—and Education Officer and Mess Caterer, Foley would eventually be responsible for managing the ship library and acquiring movies for the entertainment of sailors and military passengers. He was also privately engaged as a bank by sailors who asked him to hold their savings from salaries.

room to a lady of 45 who ran a lending library, but now was going out of business. Miss Mary Adger, 102 years young, owned the house that was built in Revolutionary days. When complimented on her youthful appearance, “You don’t look a day over 65,” she replied, “We don’t grow old in Charleston, we just dry out from the heat.” Despite her century age, she was in full possession of her faculties. Her only concession to age was glasses. Slightly built, she wore a white dress, flecked with little black polka dots. She just bubbled with life and energy that showed themselves in lifting her shoulders only to let them fall as points of emphasis in her story required. She remembered the soldiers of General Sherman kidding her and threatening to take her back north with them. Though she stresses her opinion of them and their General with foot stampings, she remarked, “All the same, they were nice boys.” She was a girl of twenty-two then!

SUNDAY, JULY 26, 1942

Mass at 0900 in the Officers’ Mess with about 25 in attendance and 5 Communion.

MONDAY, JULY 27, 1942

Finally underway after being in Charleston since June 24, 1942. No casualties as we pulled away except that Miller, the station wagon driver, and Loftus, the postman, arrived after the gangway was hoisted aboard. They caught us downstream with the ship underway, climbing up Jacob’s ladder, portside, forward.

Degaussing practice up and down the stream below the two and a half mile bridge over the Cooper River; then we anchored in the harbor at the junction of the Cooper and Ashley Rivers between which Charleston is situated on a peninsula.²⁹

Gorgeous sunset. Steeples of old Charleston churches were silhouetted against the evening sky like pencils poised to write but they never did get around

to writing before the night closed in and swallowed them up.

TUESDAY, JULY 28, 1942

3:00 A.M.—Rose for Mass this morning. 0400—Breakfast.

1) Charleston now bathed in the soft, radiant light of the setting moon. The small net tenders bob quietly on either side of the ship, their riding lights paling now in the growing dawn. We steer through and immediately there is a sudden transformation. The ship is now fully alive; all her faculties at work as we swing into full speed.

2) The whole world seems at peace but it is not.

3) Harbor tug chugs alongside to pick up some gear left behind by Navy Yard workmen on an emergency welding job.

4) Blahnik, Bosun 1/c, shouts gruffly at the tug Captain to keep his boat in one place alongside for at least three minutes so that the welding machines can be placed aboard her. Tug skipper retorts something but it is lost to us as wind carries it away, and in a few minutes the tug casts off and we are underway.

5) We slow down as we maneuver through the minefields and bear for the net, the last barrier between the marauders of the sea and the safety of the harbor. The gate is open.

6) 0555—Navy planes on dawn patrol pick us up. As dawn breaks slowly, we can make out faintly on the horizon five ships clustered together. Dr. Daniels, Lt. Commander Crawford and I wonder if we are to join them for our trip north to what we guess is our destination, Norfolk. Sun is beginning to streak the eastern horizon now with fingers of gold as we head out to sea.

Dr. Daniels hopes that since it is so bright that we won’t have General Quarters. We concur. Lt. Crawford talks about Hendrik [Willem] van Loon’s books; his books as gargantuan as his size.³⁰

²⁹ Degaussing—generally accomplished by the dragging of an electric cable along the hull—was a process for weakening a ship’s magnetic field so it would be less likely to attract magnetized mines. The work had to be done periodically, as the effect wore off.

³⁰ General Quarters is an all personnel call to battle stations. Van Loon (1882–1944) was a prolific, popular and sizeable American historian and writer of children’s books. He was the author of *Our Battle*, a retort to Hitler’s *Mein Kampf*, and was a friend of President Roosevelt.

Suddenly, General Quarters comes over the broadcasting system. I give the ship General Absolution and I head, as does everybody else, for my battle station; everybody with a tremendous, deliberate speed, yet no confusion for every man has a definite destination. General Absolution may be administered when a group of individuals are in danger of death.

In sick bay, my station, are 10 hospital corpsmen, Dr. Daniels, Dr. Harris, senior medical officer, and myself. Dr. Harris gives all of us a talk on first aid, prefacing his lecture, which is informal, with the observation that as the “Plan of the Day” noted, the ship is passing through highly dangerous submarine waters. Forty-seven contacts made this past week. All of us are ready for action; our life preservers secured on us. We listen to the doctor as he talks about the first aid for burns, for hemorrhage, shock, chest wounds and suffocation. He breaks out human plasma and suddenly the generosity of blood donors all over the country comes home vividly alive. At any moment something may happen that will bring a man into the sick bay whose life will be saved by this plasma. The atmosphere is a strange one in the sick bay. There is no nervousness of any kind but in the back of everybody’s mind is the thought that “it” may happen any minute.

0715—Secure from General Quarters. We have made the first part of our trip successfully. There has been no need to use the Holy Oils that I carry with me all the time and none for Holy Viaticum, the Eucharist administered to the dying. “What need is there for us to fear?”, as I asked the men last Sunday. Christ is with us; that is the one thing that matters; everything else is secondary.

Out on the deck at the end of General Quarters, 25 miles off the coast. High aloft are the lookouts on the bridge in the crow’s nest. Sun dazzling in its brightness. Sky a cloudless blue; water, clear blue. Ship is headed straight for the sun as though her rendezvous was in it. In the next few minutes she has turned completely away as the rudder is turned to zigzag her and prevent the subs from getting aim on us.

Up on the flying bridge, Commander Irwin complained about stopping to put the pilot off at the buoy outside of Charleston Harbor. “Why, just two days ago a sub was sighted lying in wait there by that very buoy.”

Suddenly one of our dive bombers comes sweeping over our fo’c’s’le, the men at the guns getting practice training, following her all the way with their sights. Off portside half a mile, a slow PBY circles like a hawk in the clear summer sky around us, keeping down any subs that may be lurking. Mr. McRae mentioned yesterday that daytime is very dangerous for us and night is not. Must ask him why today. He looked sleepy this morning; had been waked at 0100 to decode a set of identification signals after getting to bed at 2330. Their challenge—FF. Reply—0. One set of signals for major war vessels, another set for minor ones, and these change every four hours.

Hour is still only eight o’clock though it seems the time since three o’clock has been long enough for two days.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 29, 1942

0300—Up at this hour for Mass. Starting off the new day with the privilege of offering His Holy Sacrifice. Quartermaster Kirk called me and inquired if I wanted the door “cracked” (opened). Replied: “All the way.”

0415—Beautiful moonlit morning. Six huge black shadows are anchored here in the same roadstead with us, the convoy that we passed yesterday afternoon, all of fifteen hours ago. It is a peaceful sight to see them all swinging idly at anchor peaceful and silent but the silence is tense, a pregnant one. Though we are in a protected area, a sub could sneak up and send a “fish” into us.

On deck below, mess attendants, sleeping topside, are awakened by man on watch, one of their own company of twenty. Waker goes around, yelling at them: “Rise and shine, boys; rise and shine.”

Door to my stateroom is open when I return and I read some of my Office. Lt. Commander Crawford, who had been on the midnight watch until 0400, enters, excuses himself, says that it is none of his business, but he would like to know why I get up one hour before the rest of the ship. Four o'clock is bad enough, but three! Told him that I say my Mass every morning here in the room, rising about one hour before the ship, when battle operations prevent men attending in the Mess Hall.

0445—Breakfast in a still darkened ship, by the light of two emergency flashlights.

0530—We are underway, escorted by two PCs that race along on port and starboard, about a mile off, and two minesweepers about two miles ahead of us fishing the waters for our big ship. Meanwhile we await the signal for General Quarters, for the ride is beginning to crimson the east.³¹

0555—Two planes roar overhead; dip in salute, challenge us, “FF,” reply “D”, our challenge “RRR,” then they soar on ahead, flying in circles of about five miles around us.

So the morning starts. We are flanked with protection on the sea and in the air against whatever may be on or under the surface. We are travelling through, as one man on the ship termed it yesterday, with the aptness and incisiveness of a phrase characteristic of the bluejacket, “Torpedo Junction.”³²

Sunrise about 0630 and no General Quarters; ample protection frees us from the “Man All Battle Stations” signal. Glorious sunrise; sun comes up through a cloud formation, craterlike. It promises to be another ideal day at sea, same as yesterday.

Met Mr. McRae who answered my doubt about what his code statement meant. “We anchor tonight.”

During the morning we are making 17 knots, faster than any sub can make under water. But eternal watchfulness is the price of safety. Lookouts are posted everywhere; crow’s nest, sky, platform, fore and aft. Captain and Executive Officer and Officers on bridge are constantly scanning the waters all around us with their glasses for the tell-tale white feather of the sub that wants to send a “fish’ into us.

The morning is one that would delight the heart of anyone who likes to travel on a ship. Ship is rolling a bit but not enough to send men to sick bay with seasickness; only one mess attendant complains of feeling unwell. Sea is an amethyst blue; white foam is curling over forward both port and starboard as we plough ahead. Occasionally a porpoise sticks his rudder bow and stern up and lookouts identify it.

After reading my Office on the searchlight deck, I turn to work in the library. Finally have all squared away and send a billet-doux to all the Officers with a mimeographed list of all books, fiction and non-fiction.

Noontime dinner in peace; after dinner, a catnap and then back to the library after a stroll around the boat deck.

Finally we have General Quarters again after dinner from 1830 to 2030. When we secure, we discover that we are anchoring for the night inside Cape Lookout.³³ On our starboard the moon, a disk of beaten gold, is coming up to enhance the quiet beauty of the night at sea. Meanwhile the ship has been “darkened” with all lights cut off from outside vision; battle ports are installed and all hands turn

³¹ PC was an acronym for Patrol Craft, often referred to as “submarine chasers.”

³² Bluejacket is slang for sailor. Torpedo Junction was a phrase applied by sailors to areas of the ocean that saw high levels of enemy submarine traffic. An area near the Solomon Islands in the Pacific and east of the Carolinas in the Atlantic were so designated. The phrase was a play on “Tuxedo Junction,” a song made popular by the Glen Miller Orchestra in 1940. Foley sailed on the *Clymer* in both Torpedo Junctions.

³³ On the North Carolina coast, some 250 miles from Norfolk.

to bunks for we have an early rising again tomorrow morning. Thanks be to God for His guidance of us today. He was with us when we zigged and when we zagged. “Thank you, Lord.”

THURSDAY, JULY 30, 1942

0730—I start to fall asleep standing up as the gentle rhythm of the boat rocks; incidentally, I seem to be a good sailor—no ill effects of any kind.

Lie down for an hour to make up for the early (0300) rising. Read some Office; work away in the library, then stroll along the flying deck bridge.³⁴ A day made in heaven; indescribably blue sea, sky unflecked even by the slightest wisp of a cloud, foam cresting over endlessly as we plough ahead zigzagging with a purpose.

Dinner is served without interruption, then I go up on the bridge, talking with Dr. Daniels when the Executive Officer called over and asked us if we wanted to see the sunken ship about five miles off the port bow. Just before starting over, I noticed the PC ahead of us that had been crisscrossing in wide sweeps suddenly cut across our bow at right angles, hell bent for leather. I remarked her hectic gyrations to Dr. Daniels, heard the Captain speak to Navigator Eden, “Watch that PC.” I had just spotted the hull of the sunken ship sticking up out of the water five miles away with her flag still flying when I heard peep, peep, peep, peep, peep, peep, peep, etc. at one o’clock. The PC was signaling that she had made contact. I dashed with controlled speed to my battle station in the sick bay. I had hardly reached it when the 5” gun on the stern blasted away. I thought at the first blast that we had been torpedoed. A second and a third blast followed in quick succession and then silence. Learned later that she had contacted two subs operating together, evidently aiming at what would have been a prize catch to report to Adolph on their return from fishing in these waters.

Remained on General Quarters until 2:30. The rest of the afternoon passed uneventfully but at night at 6:30 once more had General Quarters and we stayed on until 11:00 when we were approaching Hampton Roads [Virginia]. Turned in while the rain howled outside.

FRIDAY, JULY 31, 1942

Anchored; learned that we finally dropped the hook at 3:00 this morning. Another safe voyage. Deo gratias.

SUNDAY, AUGUST 2, 1942

Dinner with Fr. Dan O’Connor, S.J., a new Chaplain, and friends at 1526 Ocean View Avenue, Norfolk. Afterwards I took them around the ship.³⁵

THURSDAY, AUGUST 6, 1942

Met Mrs. Taylor again; a happy reunion.

SUNDAY, AUGUST 9, 1942

Chesapeake Bay. Yesterday we pulled up the hook in Hampton Roads and made one trip up the Bay to Wolf Trap, the degaussing station. Before pulling it up, Boat Group tactics for invasion engaged the men.

Today enjoyed good weather in the afternoon after a squally morning. An unusual sight was a liner dressed in normal colors of white superstructure, black hull and red trimmings. She made a lovely picture, cruising along slowly in the setting afternoon sun that showed her off to excellent advantage. Reason for the normal dress was explained by the identification on her side. “Portugal,” painted in letters that could not be missed.³⁶

MONDAY, AUGUST 10, 1942

Anchored off Cove Point on portside. Cove Point Lighthouse is on a finger of land reaching out from the Maryland shore. She is a little doll lighthouse that apparently moved off a birthday card and forgot

³⁴ An open area above the main bridge, with wide-ranging views of the surroundings. Often the highest point on a ship.

³⁵ Like Foley, O’Connor taught at Boston College.

³⁶ Portugal maintained neutrality during World War II.

its way home. Dutch is the word for her. Beside her is the keeper's residence, its red roof forming a beautiful contrast with the white of the lighthouse. Against the background of trees and thick foliage, the whole scene is ready to be moved onto the canvas of an artist, the setting sun lighting up all.

Standardization tests today: speed, forwards, backwards, the work of the compasses, the radio, etc. Hoisting out of boats at 8:30 in the dark well done, considering the greenness of the crew.

TUESDAY, AUGUST 11, 1942

Went 40 miles up the Chesapeake for runs over a measured mile. Off portside had first sight of Annapolis, city of Anna. How beautiful she looked bathed in the radiance of the morning sun! Unlike buildings at Norfolk, her white and green and red have not been transformed into war gray and dark green.

Mosquitoes are bad tonight. Men sleeping topside complain of them. One of them visiting sick bay said he woke up to hear them arguing whether to finish draining him there or take him ashore. Finally settled by one hummer who said, "No, if we take him ashore, the big shots will get him!"

1800—First invasion test opposite Cove Point. Out in the stream with us are three of our sister ships. We watched them last night; tonight we provide the show. All invasion boats are hoisted out in amazingly quick time—27 minutes. As they go over the side, they cruise out to a predetermined circle until all are over, then they come back in, one by one, pick up troops, steam out to a designated new circle off the starboard bow, then divisions cluster into a flotilla under the command of Lt. Cmdr. Olsen in Eureka boat.³⁷ He gives the signal and they start for the "enemy" shore, cross path of water between them and us ablaze with the fire of the setting sun. Roar of fourteen "Invader" motors breaks the quiet summer peace of Chesapeake. Suddenly all the boats, now two miles away, turn at a given signal, make for the shore, let down their ramps, rush back to the ship and then fol-

low the same pattern as the first. So on indefinitely until the assault troops are all ashore.

Later in the evening I answered Jim Gormley's letter informing him about intimate details of our ship: "You will be glad to know that she has a bow and a stern. The former is pointed and the latter is streamlined. You will also be interested in learning that she has a number of decks, above and below the waterline. On these decks we walk. When we do, we wear regular clothes, not bathing suits. Come the war, bathing over the side went out. Our ship also cuts a mean prow. Like other ships, she can cleave the incredibly blue waters, turning them over and over into endless waves of milky foam. You must know also that she can churn a good wake. Seagulls coast along effortlessly behind her, breasting the air. Occasionally they vary their routine and then resume the even tenor of their flight. Once in a while they must veer off their course when the engineers start to feed their big pipe. Lastly, you must know for your complete satisfaction, that the chaplain is not the only one on board. There is a skipper and a crew as well as other staff officers. Now you know all about us, so if we ever steam by your front porch, you won't be excused for failing to give us the 21 gun salute!" I hope the censor doesn't strike too much of this out!

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 1942

Sailor, apparently unbalanced, tried to commit suicide by hanging himself from the ramp of one of the invasion boats topside. Fortunately, he is seen in time and cut down before he strangles himself.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 1942

During an interim in the morning's business, I sit me down to pick away at a letter to my big sister.

"A young fellow just left me who was stunned by some news from home about the serious illness of his mother who lives in San Francisco. Since he was a Catholic boy, I could tell him there was only one thing for him to do; kneel down before the crucifix and on his Rosary ask for strength

³⁷ A shallow-draft personnel landing craft that was widely deployed in WW II.

from Our Lord to bear his cross. Precisely there in their background our boys have a tremendous advantage over the others, in the motives that carry them through. Unfortunately, many of these men from the South come from religiously illiterate families. God means absolutely nothing to them. I try to steer them around to what they are lacking, but it is a long voyage most of the time.”

“How is baseball coming along in Boston? Marvelously, you say. That’s right by the Boston papers. I pick them up in Norfolk when we go ashore occasionally. You would never guess where one Red Sox pitcher of the past wound up. Pitching for Portsmouth here in the Piedmont League; by name, ancient Jack Russell. How the mighty have fallen! Tony Lazzeri manages the team. Ben Chapman of explosive temperament is also directing the fortunes of a team in the same league. The salad days of both are now over and it is rough going trying to please fans in the hinterlands.”³⁸

“In the meantime since I wrote to you last what have we been doing? Running up and down Chesapeake Bay practicing drills; fire, abandon ship, gunnery. It is quite an experience to be aboard ship when the guns are booming by day but particularly by night. The nights are inky black but starry. The target is idling at anchor two miles away with a big canvas about ten feet square riding on it. Suddenly our powerful searchlight picks it out of the dark as we are making a starboard run. All the guns on that side are manned. The orders come clear from the bridge over the telephone; are repeated by the gunnery officer. “Five minutes to go.” The men seem almost indifferent as they stand around with the refills. “Three minutes to go.” The trainer, sighter, loader, powderman automatically tense

themselves. “One minute to go.” They are all poised. “Commence firing.” The roar of thunder fills every corner of the quiet night. A tremendous burst of orange flame licks out savagely at the darkness. The hot blast wraps itself around us for a split second even though we are thirty yards away on the boat deck. The ship has shivered from stem to stern but is herself again quickly. Meanwhile the shell is whistling its way to the target – a silver streak of destruction. Somebody shouts in admiration, “On the nose!” And there is a murmur of approval from the crew; no histrionics of any kind, just a Navy man’s approval of a good job. Again and again at three second intervals the operation is repeated for half a dozen times until we steam by the target, cease firing, and turn back for another run with another gun crew to test its accuracy. Quite an experience; a test of the caliber of the men. Between ourselves, two broke under it: a young Jewish ensign who thought he would have a shore assignment and a fifteen-year old boy who falsified his age to enlist. Both are now back in civilian life.”

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 1942

Met Lt. Owen Gallagher from Boston as he stepped into the bus at Portsmouth; a B.C. graduate who is now an officer aboard the USS Santee, a new aircraft carrier.³⁹

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 1942

We are out in the stream again. A couple of PT boats, black, lethal weapons roar by us.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 1942

I make a trip to the Norfolk City Jail this Monday morning to rescue some of my men who had run afoul of the law. I sit in the courtroom waiting for their cases to come up. Before they do, five unfortunate women, none older than twenty-three, have their cases called. The Army calls them camp-followers,

³⁸ Russell was a journeyman pitcher who played for the Red Sox from 1926–1932. Lazzeri was a Hall of Fame infielder who played for the Red Sox from 1926–1939. Chapman, a pitcher and outfielder who played for the Red Sox from 1937–1938, was noted for intemperate behavior and brawling.

³⁹ Gallagher (1902–1977) was a 1923 graduate and lawyer. A lieutenant commander in the Navy, he later represented the 8th Suffolk District in both houses of the Massachusetts legislature.

while the sailors label them seagulls. The five of them pass by the benches where the spectators in the jammed courtroom are sitting. They are the most tragic specimens of womanhood I have ever seen. As they were marched out of their common pen in the rear of the courtroom, some of them were absolutely crestfallen, keeping their eyes on the floor, their heads down. Others, apparently caring nothing for the world's opinion of them, wore an air of false bravado but they were poor actresses. Their transparent braggadocio gave them away. All of them had the stamp on their faces of what they were, women of easy virtue. I don't think they were to blame. I am sure they must be victims of broken homes or of vicious persons in this big port town. But all of them confirmed the truth that when a woman loses her purity, "in the love that blights and sears," she loses her dearest possession. Her soul as well as her body is permanently scarred. She has lost faith in herself.⁴⁰

When all of those sad creatures have been sent away for indefinite terms for the protection of themselves as well as of society, the next case is of a girl, a secretary at our Naval Base. She is obviously of a different type. She has been caught "in articulo amoris flagrante delicto." The judge asks, "Where is the man in the case?" as the police officer concludes his evidence. The brave man is nowhere to be seen. The judge warns the girl in a strict but paternal tone that, if she appears before him again on a morals charge, she will have the same sentence as those who just preceded her. The judge fines her fifteen dollars. Her sister, from Washington, D.C., is standing near her all the time and is almost beside herself with grief. She is crying as though her heart would break as she pays the fine and leads her sister, who is dry-eyed, out of the courtroom.

My two sailors come up next. The judge listens to my pleas on their behalf and then releases them into my custody with a warning to them not to get into

trouble again while our ship is in Norfolk. "If so, there will be no manifestation of leniency the next time," he tells them.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 1942

Four new doctors come aboard; Anderson, Deaton, Cassidy and Hughes. Cassidy is the only Catholic among them.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 1942

I give out the heavy sweaters, helmets and sox donated by the Red Cross to the crew. This evening we steam up the Chesapeake which is a moon-lit bay this night.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 1942

0730—Word is piped down by the boatswain's mate: "TROOP LANDING CONDITION A." We are rehearsing for the invasions. All invasion boats, the entire thirty-two of them, are manned by their crews, the tank lighters, the Higgins and the Eureka boats.⁴¹ Cargo nets are dropped over the sides of the ship; the order is given to lower away. Down the boats swing out of their nest over the side and "Boats Away." Meanwhile the light cruiser, USS Wichita, off our starboard beam sends five seaplanes aloft, her contribution to our umbrella of planes. The aircraft carrier, USS Charger, steams by at full speed, launching her planes from her flight deck with split second precision. A battlewagon, the USS Texas, on our port side cruises back and forth, forming part of our protecting screen. The men play their part as though this was their tenth rehearsal instead of only the second.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 1942

Dale Sparr, a storekeeper, starts to talk about the movie we had last night, which he didn't like. He is from Hollywood. Tells me that one night he sat near [actresses] Kay Francis and Miriam Hopkins in a restaurant. They were worn-out women, he says. It

⁴⁰ Foley taught literature, and "love that blights and scars" is from a popular romantic ballad—"The Barrel-Organ"—by the English poet Alfred Noyes (1880–1958).

⁴¹ As with Eureka boats, noted earlier, Higgins boats were shallow-water craft designed to ferry troops from ship to landing beach. Lighters were barges.

was disillusioning to see them. The reality of what they looked like contrasted so sadly and sharply with the fiction of the movies.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 30, 1942

Carver, a Methodist, tells me that his one aim in life is to be as much like Christ as he possibly can be.

Convoy practice today. Behind us are the USS Penn and the USS Electra. Signalman by the forward starboard gun mount fails to make contact with his flag with the signalman on the Penn, so he yells up to the bridge to another signalman, “Give that guy a growl with the light.”

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 1, 1942

Invasion rehearsal again today. Location is shifted down Lyndhaven Roads a bit. Beach is on our starboard side. Off our portside, a torpedoed tanker is bottoms up in the roadstead, tirelessly washed by the waves. She was being towed in when she gave up the ghost and rolled over. She is now a melancholy marker of the effectiveness of the German subs.

Ensign Mitchell Disney comes aboard, a transfer from the USS Augusta, just a short distance away. On her decks was held a meeting of Roosevelt and Churchill when they signed the Atlantic Charter.⁴²

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 2, 1942

First Friday. Better attendance than at daily Mass during the week.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 16, 1942

Loading of troops and equipment that started last Thursday finally comes to a halt at 12 noon. Soldiers struggle up the gangplank with their packs, some weighing over 175 lbs.; preparations are at an end for a while. Now they can rest while we take them out to sea or to the Chesapeake.

As he sat on a stanchion, I overheard one soldier say to another, “I just know that I will never see my wife

again.” Noticed that none of them were as young as our sailors, most of whom are around 18.

1300—Six fussy tugs come steaming into sight ready to shepherd us out into the stream, the USS Allen, flagship, USS Susan B. Anthony, and ourselves. Susie escorted out first, then the Allen and lastly ourselves.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 17, 1942

Indian file, the USS Allen, USS Anthony, USS Penn, USS Algorab sail up Chesapeake Bay for maneuvers.⁴³ Soldiers are enthusiastic about their new home. “Chow excellent, quarters clean, etc.”

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 18, 1942

Mass at 0430. Crews’ Mass at 0700. Invasion operations. Soldiers debark over side, down nets loaded with their gear. One man first casualty; hit by gas mask as he descended. Strange note to orders introduced by orange butterfly with black-tipped wings hovering near me, a reminder of a better and happier world.

Another casualty; Tom Delaney, soldier of the 60th Infantry. Ramp of forward tank lighter released without warning and smashed his head. Nine stitches taken to close the wound; broken vertebra and fractured rib.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 19, 1942

Mock invasion of Solomon Islands in Chesapeake Bay. All troops disembarked without casualty; beach taken at 1500. Quietness of scene only emphasized the grim business that was at hand. All tanks, jeeps, live ammunition taken by the troops.

John Burke of Waltham, a B.C. sophomore, is a member of the troops. He and his friend, Jack Bennett, a junior at Notre Dame, talk over collegiate days. Both spin their dreams of what the future will be when they get back home. Both are determined to return to college to complete their education. Then Bennett is going on for law, as his father wish-

⁴² The *Augusta* was a battleship that on several occasions served as Presidential Flagship, carrying FDR and President Truman.

⁴³ All were battleships but for the *John Penn* and the *Algorab*, which, like the *Clymer*, were battle transport ships.

es. As they talk, I wonder what lies ahead of them. A picture flashes through my imagination of youthful forms lying inert on a hostile shore. Will these two splendid specimens of young American manhood, representative of all that is fine and decent, be among them, their dreams snuffed out by enemy machine guns? May God bless and protect them and bring them safely back to their own.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 22, 1942

We put back into Norfolk from Chesapeake Bay. We, the only ship of the force, fuel at Craney Island, take on additional stores and ammunition. Also some strange looking rafts that have paddle equipment with them.

Soldiers stay aboard and crew as well. I went ashore and returned with two tenor saxes, one slide trombone, a set of drums; the beginning of an orchestra.

1700—We head back up to the Chesapeake, drop the hook and are back in our old stamping grounds.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 23, 1942

0700—We heave right up—35 fathoms of chain—tremendous power and strength that have held our huge ship of 18,000 tons so loaded that there is gear adrift all over the deck. No place below to stow it.

The anchor grinds up as though reluctant to leave the soft mud of Chesapeake Bay. The hook finally breaks the water.

0715—Underway, we are the leader of the seven other ships, all Indian file. On our starboard eight lean destroyers, one flanking each ship. Oh, for a camera to take a picture! On the horizon off our starboard bow, a big battlewagon. Speculation rife on whether or not she will be with us. We don our life belts. When do we take them off?

1000—We pass Cape Henry, Virginia, and weave through the minefields. A subtle transformation runs through crew and soldiers. We are on the

way at last! Where? *Tot sententiae quot homines* — Dakar, Solomon, France, Ireland, Middle East? One guess is as good as another.⁴⁴

Destroyers have now broken formation and are scouting the sea lanes all around us, anxious to make deadly contact with any lurking subs. We catch up with the battlewagon that loitered along for us, USS Texas, a massive floating fortress. She swings in miles ahead of us, eyes the water below for our natural enemies. Now we have a seagoing tug with us, the USS Cherokee. We are running down the Virginia coast; recognize the Cavalier Hotel where I spent a delightful Sunday only four weeks ago.⁴⁵

We look back, and as far as the eye can see, ships are still in Indian file. We make a hard turn to port; turn and count. Now in all there are 15 ships in our convoy; two battlewagons, New York and Texas; one tug, Cherokee; and eleven others. We are growing! One of the doctors remarks, “Hitler, here we come!” Another chimes in, “And does he know it!” Protection all around us. Dirigible scouts, PBY [patrol] bombers, surface craft—destroyers (12 now), minesweepers, sub patrols, battlewagons.

As many as can, go topside to drink in the beauty of the October harvest moon. The inspiration seizes me and I write:

The time is 7:30. The place, somewhere on the broad sweep of the Atlantic. Two hours ago the sun, after shining in a cloudless blue sky all day, dipped slowly below the horizon. In a last fling of extravagance, as if to hint what colors it could throw on the canvas of the sky if it had a mind to, the sun painted the western horizon, crimson, gold, then flaming orange, as if reluctant to leave us at the end of a day that would eventually be written into all the history books of the world.

Accepting the challenge to paint a more glorious picture, a full Harvest Moon slowly climbs in the

⁴⁴ Foley intended the Latin proverb, from the poet Terrence, *quot homines tot sententiæ*—as many men as there are opinions.

⁴⁵ Launched in 1912 and decommissioned in 1948, the Texas was active in both world wars. It is now a museum ship in San Jacinto, near Houston.

East. Back home in New England, the nights are crisp. The farmers are getting in the fat pumpkins and the overgrown squashes. The first hoar frost is on the meadows in the morning and the corn is stalked on the vacant lot down the street. They are thinking of Halloween day a week away. The leaves on the maples, oaks, elms are dressed in a thousand radiant colors.

Now the same Harvest Moon looks down on our tense convoy that has long since left behind the protecting nets guarding the harbor of Norfolk and Chesapeake Bay from the marauders of the deep. We have eased out into the Atlantic. Our formation is now three lanes of five abreast, now five lanes of three, with the pattern constantly shifting.

We stand on the AA [anti-aircraft] gun deck, leaning on the gun shield, silently admiring and drinking in the strange, silent beauty of the scene. From our middle lane we see big ships like ourselves ploughing ahead with not a single light showing, greyhounds straining to cover the distance that separates us from our destination. Off our starboard, a lane of hammered silver runs from our ship to the little destroyer directly under the moon in the quarter sky and steadily climbing, a ghostly galleon. Off our starboard, the USS Texas, with reduced speed, leads the parade while we keep on her stern. Even looking at her, you sense the massive floating fortress that she is. If we should happen to meet the Prince Eugen or any sister ship of the ill-fated Bismarck, she and the New York could take care of it. Her steel sides bathed in the soft radiance of the moon, all her war features are subdued.⁴⁶

Suddenly, the ship swings hard to port and the lanyards lace the face of the moon, changing it every minute. They wrinkle her face; now vertically, now horizontally, now on a slant. Now the 20mm AA gun competes with its own design; its hooded nose ready to be stripped in a split second so that it can start to write its grim message across the night heavens in the tracer ink supplied by its crew that is alert.

We look down to the bow. There the spray is tossed back endlessly, a cascade silvered by a full Harvest Moon in the Atlantic. What a night! All the massed power of modern warfare; soldiers lining the rails and regretting that they didn't join the Navy—unforgettable!”

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 24, 1942

The world is wondering when and where the second front will open. We know we are it, the spearhead steaming across the broad bosom of the Atlantic.

Ashore, too, the President must be wondering how we are making out. Hope he will be able to say, “Fine, they made it!” Soon we shall be in the headlines. Wherever we are going, the scuttlebutt says it will take 17 days.

1100—General Alarm for sub.

1130—Learned that French Morocco is our invasion point, Port of Lyautey.⁴⁷

In Major Dilley's room I saw exact relief map of territory to be taken. He hopes that natives will offer no resistance. Men are to land and take fort and airport. I am bewildered by the complexity of detail necessary for an operation of this kind, yet we are but a fraction of the entire USEFNA [US Naval Expeditionary Force].

⁴⁶ The *Bismarck*, one of Germany's largest battleships, was sunk by the Royal Navy in May 1941, following a now-famous nine-day pursuit and battle in the North Atlantic. Its companion ship, the cruiser *Prinz Eugen*, escaped, survived the war, and was acquired by the United States and used in the testing of atomic bombs at Bikini Atoll in 1946.

⁴⁷ Site of a Vichy-held airport, some 75 miles northeast of Casablanca, that, once captured, served as a launch point for Allied sorties over Germany.

Journey to Morocco

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 25, 1942
Feast of Christ the King

0530—General Quarters. Mass on boat deck aft at 0630, half an hour before sunrise. The altar is set against the shield of the #16 and #18mm AA guns, with crews manning them. Portside aft of boat deck, as I turn around to start the Mass, the full moon is setting in the west, a bit pale after its long trip, looking as though it needed a rest. Stray clouds drift along slowly, keeping company with the moon to make sure that she will not be lonely. They are just a handful who apparently detached themselves from their brothers and sisters and went on their own. The others have gone to parts unknown.

The winds are blowing a bit but nothing of consequence to disturb me during the Mass. Men, hundreds of them, stand in the three lanes looking at the altar. A strange setting for Holy Mass but one that is pleasing to Our Lord and that the men will not forget. One regret—the celebrant has to keep a silent tongue in his head when he had so much to say; an unexpected and most untimely attack of laryngitis hit the Chaplain, first ever of its kind. Printed a dope sheet to familiarize men with some necessary points. Gave General Absolution.

Lieut. [Mark] Starkweather, leader of 15 Commandos, taken aboard at the last minute. They are to cut

the sub net up the river where we are to land. He tells me that the 5th Columnists of ours have been doing their work in Morocco for a long time.⁴⁸

Just before he left Washington on this trip, he said goodbye to an officer who told him that he would meet him on the dock in Morocco.

Lieut. Starkweather sent one of his Commandos, Ernest J. Gentile, to me with offers to help me in any way that he could. Later in the afternoon he visited my room. He told me their job is to cut the net silently for passage up of a destroyer; they have rubber boats with paddles on board. Hope to take charge of the net tenders without resorting to bloodshed.

Why did he sign up for this volunteer work? “I told my wife that I would give everything I’ve got; this was a chance to give. Will be doing our bit to bring the war to a close in a hurry. I’d hate to think that my two little girls would have to live in a world ruled by Hitler and his gang. That’s why I signed up.”

Calmly he spoke of his ambitions and ideals, the long preparations made for this raid, how he used to read about such things in books as a boy, without ever dreaming that he would take part in one some day.

⁴⁸ Mark Starkweather was a munitions expert working in salvage diving at Pearl Harbor when he and a small group of men with experience working under water were brought together to take part in the North Africa landing at Port Lyautey, forming a unit charged with disabling underwater defenses that blocked battleship access to the Sebou River and the nearby Vichy fortress and airfield. The unit’s effort was successful, as Foley relates in his diary, and each member would be awarded the Navy Cross—second in distinction only to the Medal of Honor—for his work. The ad hoc unit was then disbanded but is considered the forerunner of the Navy Sea, Air, and Land Teams, known as the Seals.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 26, 1942

Today, our fourth day at sea, is fairly rough for landlubbers. Yet, Mr. Kreutzer, 2nd Division Officer, asserts that this amounts to nothing. He was crossing the Pacific once, when his freighter tried to climb a wall of water three times and slid back three times. Yet it is rough enough for us strangers to the sea. Last night in my bunk, I smacked my head against the portside bulkhead as the ship rolled way over.

Out on deck after celebrating Mass with a dozen men receiving Holy Communion. As far as the eye can see, white horses are on the rampage. One of the ships behind is really pitching. Her keel is visible ten feet below the waterline as she rises up on the huge waves.

1200—A new convoy of four ships joins us, the battlewagon Massachusetts, two heavy cruisers, and a tanker. They flank our starboard side of the convoy, sliding along slowly, their horsepower cut down to keep company with us fellows who are making only 15 knots.

Lt. Robbins of the Army stops me on the way out from the wardroom. Wonders if it would be possible for me to mail a message to his wife after his outfit leaves the ship. “Just in case I am ploughed under,” he says, “I would like her to have a last word from me.” He speaks quietly of his little girl four months old whom he hopes that he will see again. He will write a letter to her also. But his problem, “What if I write, yet nothing happens and I manage to be one of the survivors of the initial attack?” He remarks that he will wrestle with the problem for a while, then let me know his decision. He is a young fellow, well-educated, who speaks in soft tones; yet through those tones runs the quiet determination that must make him a good officer for his men. I don’t like to think of him lying, a crumpled piece of humanity, on the French Morocco shore. He, like all the others aboard our ship, has so much to live for. May God bring them back safely to their own some day.

2000—I go looking for Chaplain Tepper, a Jewish Rabbi, to obtain one of the harmonicas that he brought aboard. One of his soldiers wants to make the night loud with music. Before leaving he presented me with one of the pocket knives that will be given as tokens of friendship to the native Moroccans. Brightly colored blankets and cloth are also among the goodwill offerings that make up a part of our strange cargo.

2200—I go to the chart room directly behind the bridge and discover what our course has been.⁴⁹ First we sailed directly south until we were north of Bermuda, east of Charleston, S.C., then we sailed directly east, then north, then east again until at this hour we are about 800 miles directly east of Baltimore. We delayed to allow the convoys departing after us an opportunity to catch up.

2230—Discussion in the passageway with Lt. Gilchrist and Dr. Walker. They tell me this will be the largest number of ships ever to sail together in history. We have now picked up three subs that are riding straight ahead of us on the surface. When we start landing operations, they will help to form part of the protecting screen with orders to shoot anything in sight that heaves.

Also learn from them that the password is “Bordeaux,” for our friends ashore. They speak the word, then show the inside of their hats on which the same word must be written. Practically all of our fifth column groundwork in Northern Africa has been done by Free French sympathizers.

One hour before “H” hour all the governors of Northern Africa with the exception of Spanish Morocco will be handed a letter informing them of the turn of events. They are expected to take the correct decision.

⁴⁹ Perhaps because he was a chaplain and Catholic priest, Foley seems to have had access to areas of the *Clymer* and to information that were not accessible to the average officer of his rank.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 27, 1942

5th Day at Sea. Mass at end of General Quarters as usual in the library.

0730—At breakfast we learn that the new convoy has arrived. Promptly we stow the rest of the toast down the hatch, then make for the flying bridge. Then a sight! As far as the eye can see, ships of all sorts, shapes and sizes. Aircraft carriers, battle-wagons—three more of them; 25 more transports, innumerable destroyers and SPs, heavy cruisers, all rolling in the heavy sea. It is an impressive, awe-inspiring sight, one that never does tire the eyes. Suddenly, the formations are shifting. We slacken our speed, they cross our bow at a slight angle; we pick up speed and move out to their portside. Our two middle lanes of ships move into the middle of their lineup and our starboard line shoots far out to form the starboard column of the entire convoy. Again, the sight is most impressive. As far as the eye can see, in every direction, ships are ploughing ahead while our watchdogs now steam alongside of us; then turn back. Then they shoot in between us to nail any sub foolish enough to try to do damage within the columns.

0815—Quarters Commander Irwin informs us that we must all be inoculated against typhus now for those germs have no respect for gold braid.⁵⁰

He tells us that November 7 is the “H” day; that in this convoy he counted 49 ships and then gave up. “Business is meant on this trip and we must do our part; we will do it, so let no officer consider it beneath his dignity to grab a line that needs attention when we are engaged in the unloading operations.”

To the soldiers a letter from General George Patton is read in which the reasons for this expedition are outlined. At the close of the letter he writes: “The eyes of the world are watching you, the heart of America beats for you, God’s blessing is with you.”

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 30, 1942

8th Day at Sea.

Today a fairly smooth sea running after the heavy weather of the last two days. Taking advantage of the change, three planes from the four carriers astern of us put off and go long range scouting overhead. Before long their reports come back to our ship indirectly—four German submarines 25 miles directly ahead. Immediately, we strike off to starboard on a new course to avoid those who would at least try to detain us, if not permanently detach us and as many as possible from our convoy.

1030—I continue instructions in the faith with Washington, Mess Attendant. My question is “Who is God?” He answers, “God is a being who is infinitely perfect,” and I ask him, “What do you mean by infinitely perfect?” And he replies, “Nothing no better!”

The one carrier that has been with us since the second day of the trip has her flattop jammed with Army planes. They will land after the capture of the airport at Port Lyautey before they start winging their way east to battle the German Luftwaffe.

Spend most of this day laying the keel for Sunday’s sermon when the men will be at Mass probably for the last time, for “H” hour is 2400, midnight Saturday. It is hoped that all good Frenchmen and native Moroccans will be sleeping the sleep of the just.

Before retiring I step out on the flying bridge. A destroyer is only 50 yards off our port beam, hugging close to keep off those four subs sighted earlier.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 31, 1942

9th Day at Sea.

I go topside after breakfast. Far off on the horizon the tankers are feeding their black gold to the cruisers and destroyers. We have slowed down to eight knots to keep the convoy together during this fueling at sea operation. Using the glasses of one of the lookouts, I count

⁵⁰ The gold shoulder braid worn by aides to senior Navy officers.

73 ships within sight. There are others, how many I do not know, making up the rest of our armada.

After the heavy weather of the last three days, we find the sea smooth-surfaced this morning. The planes off the four carriers astern also finally have another opportunity to go aloft to scout hundreds of miles afar for our natural enemies.

0900—At this hour we were supposed to have emergency drills. At 0930, the tweet, tweet, tweet, etc. of the public address system sends us to General Quarters, forward by starboard and aft by port.

Contact with a sub is made by a destroyer off port-side aft. Our ship shivers twice as two depth charges are dropped over the side. We sit in the sick bay, our battle station, and again the ship shivers as one more can is let go at the one who would dare approach us with our ample protection.

In the Junior Officer's Wardroom this evening we were listening to the broadcast of the Wisconsin-Ohio State football game with Ted Husing announcing. It sounded strange to hear him say: "I hope you're enjoying this game as much as we are no matter where you may be listening to it!" We were, at the time, sitting in practical darkness with illumination provided by just one small blue battle light, for "Darken Ship" had gone into effect two hours previously. We were getting ahead of the folks back home on time with every passing day. Eventually we would be six hours ahead of them.

This evening three depth charges make things uncomfortable for subs that dared venture too close to us.

Our ship is a floating arsenal. If she is hit, the report will be that she "disintegrated."

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 1, 1942

Feast of All Saints and 23rd Sunday after Pentecost
0650—Mass at the end of General Quarters; about

350 in attendance, 125 Communion, a most edifying sight. Very windy. God is pleased with our surroundings. Overhead is the blue canopy of the sky. We have no walls broken by stained glass windows, just sterns and bows; we boast no marble inlaid floor, just a wooden deck; no fluted columns soaring aloft and carrying on their shoulders tons of masonry and steel; only a strong king post adorned with cables and pulleys and lines that are whistling in the wind.

0900—General Service. About 200 there, including Major Dilley. I speak of Jesus Christ and loyalty to Him, the need for a man to examine the foundations of his life at this crucial time.

0330—In the afternoon, Benediction on the boat deck aft; the first with my Benediction kit. Rosary; full-throated response by Catholic men most inspiring. Altar is placed against the side of one of the invasion boats. To the left is an AA [anti-aircraft] station; men manning it over the side. Starboard are ships of our convoy, all steaming south away from the western sun that is slanting its rays on us. Three hymns: "Mother Dear, Oh Pray for Me"; "Holy God We Praise Thy Name"; "Tantum Ergo." Unforgettable—men remark on it later!⁵¹

Jack Bennett, Notre Dame boy, 15006 Fenway Avenue, Lakewood, Ohio, serves my Mass. He is one of the soldiers aboard ship. He says that he gets more of a thrill out of serving my Mass on the boat deck aft, flush against the side of an invasion boat or up against an AA gun mount shield, than he did the times he served in Cathedrals.

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 6, 1942

Ship vibrates violently; four depth charges dropped by destroyer ahead of us. Later tremendous oil slick floats by our starboard side.

"Wallace Beery" Johnson, member of Naval Commando Net Party, weight 225, infectious smile, gentle as a kitten, pounds out a good tune on the

⁵¹ Benediction is a devotional ceremony whereby a priest blesses the congregation with the Eucharist.

piano, his favorite—“Indian Love Call” by Victor Herbert.⁵²

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 1942

Mass at dawn; about 50 received. Our planes are flying in formation over us. THE DAY! Men give me letters to mail “just in case they are killed;” give me money to hold for them or to send home.

0900—Soldier on deck singing as he makes his way aft—“Give My Regards to Old Broadway.”

0330—Benediction and Rosary; 300 present.

SATURDAY NIGHT, NOVEMBER 7, 1942

10:00 P.M.—Jagged lightning behind what appear to be hills in the distance.

12:00—Midnight Patrol Boat—if it fires, “Blast her out of the water.” We also passed a Portuguese ship last night brightly illuminated. She did not see us; if she had, she would have been sunk after her passengers were taken off.

I give out Viaticum⁵³ to the Catholic men in the library after hearing confessions.

12:45—Go topside, inky blackness; can’t even see my hand in front of me. Two clusters of light ashore; boats going over the side.

I stand by silently and bless the men as they start their battle operation. The President speaks four hours before we land.

0230—Mass in library with Jack Burke present.

0315—Topside. Cmdr. Irwin is directing traffic on the bridge.

0330—Tea and toast.

0500—Five French ships, merchant-men, pass right ahead of us, blue, red, green; “Foudrayante Domremy” unmistakably painted on the sides.⁵⁴

0545—Lieut. Starkweather sends up red cluster that shows the net has been broken and that the destroyer USS Dallas can go up the river to the fort and then on to the airport.

0605—Tremendous barrage of red hot steel laid down on the beach. Broken arc of red dashes against the black velvet of the night sky.

Dawn. A cloudy day. Lieut. Haile returns to the ship and remarks that the first three waves got ashore without difficulty. Commando Net Party returns to ship; net not broken. Searchlight picked them up—crossfire of machine guns nailed party down helplessly.

0740—Shore batteries open fire on us alone; we are the biggest of eight ships with all invasion boats clustered around us like a hen with chicks—eight near misses. Wheeeeeeeeeee----then tremendous geysers; one shell right over the forecastle. We could follow the course of the shells coming from the fort on the crest of the hill.

0800—“Enemy Bombers Overhead!” from Executive Officer.

0805—USS Pennsylvania AA guns fire—two puffs—plane aflame, plunges into ocean, disintegrates.

0815—USS Savannah and USS Texas pour tons of steel into the fort. Ammunition dump ashore a pillar of smoke.

⁵² Beery (1885–1949) was a large, beloved, rough-hewn character actor.

⁵³ Eucharist offered to those in imminent danger of dying.

⁵⁴ Foley’s reference to “French ships” in this case is to vessels sailing for the exiled Free French government. In most cases, the French he refers to in the diary are Vichy troops, whom the Americans—and Free French—fought in North Africa. “Foudrayante” is a French verb meaning to strike powerfully, while “Domremy” is a misspelling, and should read Doremy, which was Joan of Arc’s birthplace.

0945—Three casualties; two serious—Lt. McCrackin and Kolfenbach, a Catholic to whom I administer the Last Sacraments when he was dying after being on the operating table for two hours. Four bullets drilled him; strafed by planes as his boat hit the beach. “All hands to General Quarters; enemy submarine sighted off starboard beam.”

1230—In sick bay. Depth charges rocking ship during operations on wounded. We maneuver wildly to escape subs.

1330—We have command of the air with our planes cruising in formation over us. Topside, heavy firing shoreward and seaward. Radio man tells me last report. “Co. F reports that it is completely surrounded by the enemy.”

1630—Six more casualties; three ambulatory.⁵⁵

Lieut. Starkweather of Net Party reports that “we were spotted immediately and caught in searchlights, withering crossfire of machine guns, both jetties, and then we had to run for it as the fort laid it on us also.”

Young sailors who wouldn’t wear life jackets once now all wear them; wouldn’t wear helmets either. “Enemy bombers overhead” cured them. Strange, even at that announcement, how one could be so cool, stand watching them, and go to bed at 2015 and sleep through a quiet night.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 1942

Arose at 0700. Mass attended by Commando Party in gratitude for their safe return. Day is a bit cloudy; “rainy sunshine.” We move closer, within four miles of beach. Tremendous surf crashing on the jetties, ship rolls on the swell. Fifteen more wounded. We move within one mile of the beach. Picturesque summer colony of light brown cottages with red-tiled roofs. On this beach our men landed yesterday morning.

Four men dumped out of boat as she was being hoisted in; dangerous but nobody is injured, fortunately. One man wounded in arm; was ducked once on beach, then again as he was being lifted into the ship.

Twenty-three American bombers fly over us. Last night two destroyers pour hot metal over the hills at some objective which we cannot see; arc of red hot dashes for miles.

Boat #5 spills being lifted up with one wounded man who gets ducked. Inboard guy loose. Five dumped when Penn tanker hit sandbar, then surf upended, nosed her over with men in tank.

Report on radio: “Fierce fighting north of Casa Blanca.” “That’s us,” says Perkins, E. M. 1/c.

Sick Bay Cases:

1. Machine-gunned by plane before hitting beach.
2. Machine gunned on shore.
3. Shrapnel cases.

⁵⁵ In the winter and spring of 1995, Foley was interviewed several times at Boston Collège by Steve O’Brien, who was writing a thesis based on Foley’s diary. Foley is ill with cancer at the time, and he would die on October 21, at age 91. The following, in which Foley reflects on his encounter with the wounded of Port Lyautey, is from a March 6, 1995 interview and appears in O’Brien’s published thesis *Blackrobe in Blue*. “War wounds are not the neat wounds inflicted by a surgeon’s scalpel by any means. You wonder where flesh begins and where the sand begins. Grenades hitting people or something like that. The bullets. The grenades. The human body is just a mess. I was only afraid once in the Navy, when I went down with that purser to sick bay with the doctors. By then the German submarines were bothering us and we were ‘dogged down’ as they say. So if a torpedo comes in, only that particular place would be lost, flooded completely. And here I am, about 100 wounded aboard the ship and they are lying on the tables in the mess hall and boy did I play the hypocrite. I was deathly afraid for the first time. As Shakespeare said, ‘My seated heart knocked against [at] my ribs.’ It was pounding. Pounding. And here I am going around as a hypocrite telling the poor wounded boys who were moaning, ‘We’ll be alright.’ And here I am. I never met a man yet who was in danger, whether from shore batteries or from bombs or submarines who wasn’t afraid, no matter who the officer was. That was the only time in all my service days that I was ever afraid. After that, I had had my baptism, and I wasn’t afraid.”

4. Concussion—Jack Bennett.
5. Man blinded in whose face gun exploded.
6. Crushed by boats against side of ship.
7. Crushed by boat broached on the beach.
8. USS Penn: Seven drowned in tank boat nosed over by surf-heavy swell, i.e., way ship rolled.

One man about 26 was quietly sobbing to himself. “If I can help you, I’d be glad of the privilege. What’s the trouble?” “Nothing, sir.” After a while, he said that he went to pieces under the gunfire, machine gun, plane strafing, and coast artillery and men crumbling on every side of him.

1000—Commando Net Party tries again. I give Catholics Viaticum; six of them.

1015—They shove—portside aft—pitch dark down the landing net. Just before they go, “Kneel down, men.” *Benedictio Dei*, etc. “May the blessing of Almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost descend upon you and remain forever. May He be with you in your mission and bring you back safely.”

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 1942

There was a knock on my door at 0400. Three men of the Party, Chief and two others. “Well, Padre, we made it.” Congratulations and then the story. Ran out of fuel first, came back at midnight to the ship, then started in again, black as coal. Tremendous surf. Got by the jetties, being carried down the river. No Colonel Henny on the dock of the fish cannery as expected. Suddenly swept onto the net; rocket guns cut steel cables one inch thick—one cut, current forced most of cable out; then cut the other and both of the two dories at either end of them swept out to sea and they swept out after them, raked by machine gun fire from nests south of the fort and by 75mm from near the fort; shell about 18 feet long and eight inches in diameter. Green, the bow hook,⁵⁶ Southern youngster. “Did you ever operate a machine gun before?” “No, sir, but ah sure operated this one!” (Quiet, soft-spoken, yet to shave.) Courage and bravery of

these boys under fire—don’t worry about American youth, one and all of them. Surf 30 feet high on way out. Boat about 30 feet long pointed bow rides up to the crest and then drops as if going over a cliff. Lt. Starkweather lifted up bodily, flung nose first on the deck—sprained ankle, smashed fingers. “Would rather face hell of machine gun fire than that surf again.” Afraid—all of them grown men but got used to it after a while.

0700—Destroyer Dallas goes up the river 48 hours late with 80 Rangers to take the airfield.

1030—Seven casualties brought alongside; four brought aboard when General Quarters was sounded. First Aid station was set up on the beach, then carried out, ferried to us on ship in tank lighter. Three left behind in lighter as we got underway on sub alarm.

I stayed with a Lutheran who remarked, “I sure would appreciate a prayer.” He had been wounded by shrapnel in the arm badly, in the forehead, on the left eyebrow, left hip, left leg in front and right calf. “Sweet Jesus, mercy. I offer up this suffering for you in union with your sufferings on Calvary for my sins, for my buddies wounded and lying ashore without protection or attention.”

1345—Just met Lt. Gilchrist outside my door. He was in the tank lighter that capsized yesterday 300 yards from shore, in 30 feet of water, nosed over by 30 feet of surf. Four soldiers in tank trapped and drowned, sunk not like a stone but like what she was—a tank.

1350—End of General Quarters.

1430—Dive bombers, three of them, circled over target on hill, then leveled off, came in and blasted; then Texas on north and Cruiser on south poured in their salvos of shellfire.

1500—Tug pulls alongside with two Frenchmen; name of tug—Moumein. Two family men said that

⁵⁶ Look-out who sits forward in a boat or ship.

Germans took them to Dakar. They jumped off the ship and swam ashore. French think they are fighting the English. Took both of them to wardroom for coffee. They asked for milk for the children. Loaded them with food and their tug with supplies for men ashore.

Situation ashore: Airport taken today at 1200. Our P-40s land; five nose over. A Major, one of our patients, was the only one seriously hurt.

This afternoon casualties started to flow back to us; lose first man, Huffstutler, from a bullet wound in stomach.

A Protestant carried over his heart a copy of the Gospel according to Mark, small copy—bullet cut through it and picture of his girl and left only a black and blue bruise. “Supply your own explanation, Father.”

1800—Dinner in wardroom, radio turned on. Englishman broadcasting from Berlin remarked that Mehdia Beach had been captured. First mention of us at all by any commentator. Oran and Tangiers fell last night, Monday.

2000—Executive Officer informs me that the Captain desires burial of soldier who died this evening to be done ashore tomorrow morning.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 1942

0900—I go ashore in support boat with body of Huffstutler. Two machine guns on either side and cases for 48 rockets, 4 lbs of TNT, racks six on either side with four slots on each.

We hug the south jetty on the northern side. Swirling current and surf about ten feet high. See tragic reminders of inexperience of coxswains with this shore; overturned lighters near the rocks. River runs parallel with ocean after a sharp turn.

We hit Brown Beach and as I step ashore on African soil for the first time I raise my hand in blessing.⁵⁷

The entrance to the fort is just off the narrow catwalk. Off to the left is the house where temporary headquarters have been set up. I inform the doctor present of my mission and am directed to Blue Beach where a cemetery is being built. On the way up I see the roadway lined with bodies of Americans and Moroccans. Directly overhead are the frowning walls of the old sandstone Moroccan fortress that our men took by storm yesterday. After a mile and a half ride in an Army jeep I met Dr. Cassidy, our young doctor, who went ashore with the medical detachment Sunday morning. He is happy to see me and all his corpsmen sing out a “Hello, Father!” They are working like slaves taking care of the American, French and Moroccan wounded. A hospital has been improvised of a large summer residence. Twenty beds have been set up and there the wounded are being attended to. I give the Last Rites to two badly hit Frenchmen who will die.

Mehdia Plage itself is a picturesque little summer resort of 154 houses by actual count. French love of color in evidence—buff, cream-colored walls, blue blinds, red and green tiled roofs.

I am told that Army Chaplain Tepper, the Jewish Rabbi for whom I am searching, is up at the cemetery just over the brow of the hill behind the town. On the way up I see three women and a cluster of half a dozen children about four and five years old. I tell Conway the bugler and the soldier accompanying me to wait for a minute while I go down and identify myself as a Catholic priest and give them some medals of Our Lady and the Little Flower. The eyes of the mothers light up at the mention of St. Therese de Lisieux.

Pass gabled house—seven gables and cone-shaped roof, along a sand road, down, then up a slight incline, a turn to the left through the short cedars, where an American flag identifies the location of seven American bodies. There is a sailor from the Anthony Cooper who is awaiting burial. He was killed when his tank lighter capsized and his head struck the side.

⁵⁷ Foley had a practice of blessing every shore he landed on while in the Navy. He also blessed, from a distance, men in sinking ships or under fire on shores or trapped in airplanes he saw fall from the sky.

Chaplain Tepper is now down at the fort I am told, so I start down for the Mehdia Plage again and receive a ride up to the fort there and meet Tepper who is directing the collecting of the bodies. The fort was a formidable military installation, a steep precipice on one side and three slopes leading up to it on the other side, pitted with foxholes and trenches. Flanking its approaches are large concrete square houses with half a dozen compartments. These presented an obstacle to assaulters that was costly, as the corpses stiff, cold, and frozen in the grotesque positions of their death agony testified.

What a hideous, repulsive countenance war has. It tears the heart to see the tragedy of young faces upturned to the sky, staring with glazed eyes meaningless at the sun.

When half a dozen bodies had been collected in addition to my two boys—sailor and soldier, I started the service at about one o'clock just outside the east end of the fort by a Moslem cemetery. Along the south wall were lined the bodies. Along the east wall the graves were being dug by 50-odd Arab prisoners. They stopped, flanked me on the right, with 50 of our soldiers on my left, the bugler on my rear.

I read our prayers over them after the soldiers and Arabs and a few French have snapped to attention when the order was given them. "May the Angels lead thee into Paradise, may the Martyrs receive thee at thy coming, etc." Never shall I forget the circumstances under which I conducted that funeral service. Overhead the blue sky was cloudless, a gentle Moroccan breeze stirred the air of a day warm with sunshine. At the foot of the hill, swinging idly at anchor, were our eight ships, commando and cargo, while the protecting screen of destroyers and patrol craft and the battlewagon Texas kept away the marauders of the sea. Straight ahead stretched away the broad reaches of the Atlantic. Over the edge of its horizon was country, home, dear ones, for all of which these boys from New York and Michigan and Texas had died that

the foul breath of Hitlerism might never come close enough to blight those near and dear to them.

Here these boys lie on the crest of this hill on which they gave their last measure of devotion. The bugler sounds taps and we have paid them our last respects. "Eternal rest grant unto to them, O Lord, and may perpetual light shine upon them. May their souls and the souls of all the faithful departed rest in peace. Amen."

The simple but impressive ceremony is over and the Arabs go back to their task of digging the graves. A Catholic boy who comes up to me regrets that there was no Catholic priest aboard his ship on the way over. I hear his confession then and there on the hill.

I wander around the hill and the fort to give my blessing to men whose bodies have not yet been brought in, twelve in all. A young officer, Lt. Sharf, is one who ate in our wardroom; a splendid young Jewish boy who wondered when he left the ship at midnight Saturday if he would see his wife by her next birthday in May. He lay where he fell, 200 yards from the east wall of the fort, dying as he led his men in charge. Inside one of the small rooms in the glorified pillbox are two Catholic boys who managed to get in alive but will be brought out differently. They are lying in their own dry caked blood, their heads horribly gashed, brain of one of them completely exposed.

Off to the west are two long trenches protecting the line of six 5" guns that lobbed shells at us Sunday morning. One had been blasted by a direct hit. At the base of the other lay a boy by the name of [Michael] Hastings from New York City. His mother, mercifully, will never know how he looked in death.⁵⁸ To one and all of them I give my blessing. The last has a small funeral group as three sailors join me in saying prayers over a boy from Indiana. At the lighthouse one of the Lieutenants whom we carried over the ocean informs me that he will be grateful if I would explain to the

⁵⁸ Foley would later write to Hastings' mother. See entry for May 5, 1943.

Arab family in the square white house next to the lighthouse that they may stay if they wish. I tell them, “S’il vous plait, restez ici.” The man of the family is grateful for the information and stops carting out their pitifully few possessions. Their mule that had given them, I suppose, patient dogged service, is dead alongside their door.

Returning down to Brown Beach we see more evidence of the murderous efficiency of the dive bombing that finally crushed all resistance.

I speak with French boys 16 and 17 years old. They say that they did not know that they were fighting the Americans; they thought they were English—for whom they have apparently only a bitter hatred and would fight to the year 2000 against them.

1600—We return to Brown Beach where the prisoners are industriously unloading our boats of their supplies. A squadron of deadly tanks roar out of the temporary garage on its way to a rendezvous somewhere.

Chaplain Tepper in charge of the personal effects of the dead boys gives me something that touches me deeply—a copy of Joyce Kilmer’s “Prayer of a Soldier in France,” that I had mimeographed and gave out at the last Sunday Mass aboard ship. Yes, this day will be among one of the unforgettable!⁵⁹

Upon returning to the ship I learned that the Armistice had been signed at 1 P.M. this morning. Thank God this needless bloodshed is over, in at least one section of a bloodstained world in which Germans are killing Russians and English, Italians and Americans, French.

Climb up the side of the ship by Jacob’s ladder hand over hand up 50 feet of landing net. Pitch dark ship rolling in the long swells swings us out away from the side and then in to it.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 1942

Unloading of ship continues. I visit the wounded in their staterooms; we have 65 aboard.

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 1942

I go ashore in the afternoon to visit the American wounded in the French hospital in Port Lyautey. I step ashore at Brown Beach, arrange for transfer of all wounded—60-day convalescent cases, beg a ride in an Army jeep to the town over the crest of a hill. The town stands out dazzling white in its African colonial setting against the white green of the surrounding hills. At its entrance soldier guards challenge us. I identify myself and my mission to the two soldiers who recognize me as off the Clymer; recently they were two of the passengers. Off down the long paved highway flanked with quaint houses of varying design—some modernistic, square-boxed, cream-colored walls, blue blinds, yellow roofs. I guess that they are, or rather most of the buildings are white to lessen the heat of the Moroccan sun. In the hospital I greet two of our boys badly wounded; one will die, the other will live minus his left forearm. I give out cigarettes—worth their weight in gold, chocolate bars, and apples; people have had a lean time these last few years.

Visit with two Salesian Fathers who greet me affectionately. A trip to the Church which has a most emphatic tower, its most striking feature. The young priest with me identifies the architecture as grotesque. Inside are the statues of Our Lady, St. Anthony of Padua, The Little Flower. It is the Church of Christ the King. Although the Catholic population of the town is 17,000 and the Moroccan is 8000, most of whom are destitute, the practicing Catholics are not too many. One church is adequate for the needs of the entire town.

We pass the Municipal Building which is also striking to the eyes of an American in its design.

⁵⁹ A Chicago native, Chaplain Irving Tepper was an Orthodox rabbi attached to the Ninth Infantry Division in North Africa, Sicily, Britain, and France. He landed on Utah Beach on D-Day. Described by a fellow officer as “a frail bundle of enthusiasm, 120 lbs. dripping wet,” he died in France on August 13, 1944, at age 31, of wounds received from a German bomb.

On the way back to Brown Beach in the jeep, I espy Major Dilley of the Army. We have a happy reunion for a few minutes. When we last heard of him, he was shying away from shrapnel thrown by a French shell. It was good to see him safe and sound after so many wounded. He informed me that 74 Americans were killed, about 700 Frenchmen and Moroccans. Their firepower could not match our rifles, more rounds, grenades, machine guns, artillery, etc.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 1942

Sperry of the Commando Party presents me with a beautiful picture of the fort. I shall always treasure this tangible evidence of their thoughtfulness. It will also help to freeze in my memory the spot where I counted 58 crosses last evening.

Lt. Mark Starkweather, 3174 165th Street, Cleveland, Ohio (his permanent address) finds that he has a broken heel as another souvenir of his trip up the river to break the net.

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 1942

Although we were supposed to start out for sea yesterday afternoon, we didn't pull up the hook until 0630 this morning.

0715—Mass. End of General Quarters. "Where are we going?" is the question on everybody's lips. Casa Blanca is the answer to the question; again, only a guess but a good one for our ship has only one-third of her cargo unloaded and it would seem the height or the depth of inefficiency for us to carry back again all this most important material.

1210—We sight the *Electra* sinking. She was one of our group which, for some strange reason, ventured out alone last night and caught it early this morning.⁶⁰ At two o'clock we make out, on the shoreline with which we have been running parallel all the way, a beautiful town—Casa Blanca, with the hills

rising directly behind it. Most modern in design; apartment houses, corner windows, ten stories high, cream and buff colored buildings.

As we come in behind the breakwater we see evidence of the naval struggle that took place last Sunday, melancholy reminders of what might have been.

Dr. Walker mentions that four of our transports were sunk just off this breakwater while unloading Wednesday after the Armistice had been signed.

About one hour ago just outside the harbor the sea was littered with our life rafts and sea rations; tangible evidence of something that was hit.

Tied up alongside of us and the French freighter on the south side is a torpedoed destroyer that shipped the tin fish just above her waterline. Just the other side of the little railroad, off our starboard, is a French destroyer and a battleship burned at the water's edge.

Sermon today at Mass. Introduction—eventful week, recollections of things seen and heard, impressed indelibly on the memory. Each man has his own recollections. Mine: Saturday—Mass—Benediction, Viaticum—stories—St. Mark's Gospel copy shot—Big One—Funeral Service—Setting. One thing we all share is our obligation of gratitude to God and remembrance of the souls in Purgatory.

1900—Just back from the USS Hambleton, destroyer tied up alongside of us. It was a torpedo that wrecked one of her engine rooms, one fire room, and the electrician's room, killing eighteen and wounding six. The four ships sunk, Adam, the fireman, tells me were Rutledge, Scott, Hughes, and Bliss—all transports. Tanker Winooski that came across the ocean with us also caught two torpedoes. Scuttlebutt has us unloaded by tomorrow night and then setting out for home once again.

⁶⁰ The *Electra*, a cargo transport that was carrying wounded from North Africa when she was struck by torpedoes from a U-Boat, did not in fact sink, but was saved by a salvage crew and beached on North African soil. Once repaired, she returned to duty and later served in the Pacific Theater.

RADIO PRESS RELEASE. Churchill announced yesterday that subs hunting in packs off the N. W. Africa coast had paid a heavy price for their foolhardiness; thirteen were sunk in the last three days, five yesterday.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 1942

Casa Blanca is indescribably beautiful in the morning sunrise. Lt. Ellery of the USS Hambleton, moored on our portside for steam and electrical facilities, inquires if I am a Catholic priest. We make arrangements for Confessions at 1600. I hear them and then I go into the machinist's shop to bless the bodies of the three men taken out of the gaping hole in her portside that was the engine room until a torpedo hit her three nights ago at Fedela, where the tanker, the Winooski, also caught it along with the Rutledge, the Hughes, the Scott, and the Bliss.

2000–150 English soldiers and merchant marines come aboard. They were torpedoed on September 12; lost 2000, 1400 of them Italian prisoners, when their ship, the *Laconia*, was torpedoed. Since then they have been in a prisoners' camp. Remarks: "It was music to our ears to hear the noise of your guns." "I think that this meal is all a dream after the stuff they have been giving us." "Sir, I have been in the desert for two and a half years but I never did see such beautiful dive bombing as on last Sunday morning." One youngster, Paddy Kenny from Liverpool, is only fifteen years old; shipped in the merchant marine. "We all thank God that we are here this evening."

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 1942

1300–We carefully nose out of our pocket in Casa Blanca Harbor as #23 on the list of ships that have been shoving off all morning. Goodbye to Casa Blanca without seeing her obvious beauty at close range; too dangerous to venture ashore. Hence no

leave granted anyone. Just before we leave the Commander calls me to pacify Raymond Colle, a French boy of 18 who is sick with anxiety about what the [Vichy] French will do to him if he is put ashore. He was a member of the Army that swung over to General de Gaulle. Now those who did that are being shot as deserters as quickly as they are apprehended. Outfitting him in an American coverall and soldier's jaunty cap and putting him under the special protection of Lt. Brooks quiets him. He will proceed to Port Lyautey where he will join up with the de Gaullists there.

I meet Major Creedon, one of our guests, and find that we have a common friend in Fr. Webb of Woodstock, England, fame.

Some English were saved after their ship, the *Laconia*, was torpedoed. They would sail by day; then at night the sub would insist on towing them back to the spot they had left in order to be picked up by the [Vichy] French cruiser which the sub had contacted. Men aboard the sub who hailed the Limeys spoke perfect English. On one occasion they had to put four Italians over the side. "It was a case of either them or us." Sub apparently saw the operation, came alongside, challenged them about it; the German remarks, "Good work, after all, they were only Italians."

Next an Italian sub contacted them and asked if they had any Italians aboard their ship when she was hit. "Yes; they are aft about five miles." "Thank you; do you need anything?" "Could use some water." Gave them six bottles of water and same amount of very good wine. The irony of this gesture!

The *Laconia* lost 2000 souls when she went down in about twenty minutes even though she was about 18,000 gross tons.⁶¹

⁶¹ The *Cunard* liner RMS *Laconia* was torpedoed in the Atlantic off the coast of Africa by a German submarine on September 12. It was carrying 1,800 Italian prisoners of war as well as British passengers and military personnel. One thousand and four hundred of the prisoners, locked in their quarters, drowned when the ship sank. Others, along with the British crew and passengers, escaped to lifeboats and were picked out of the sea or taken in tow by four U-boats that then signaled their intention to bring the survivors to waiting Vichy craft. The submarines were nonetheless attacked by an American B-24, resulting in the loss of several hundred survivors. The *Laconia* Incident, as it became known, was raised during the Nuremberg Trials in defense of German naval practices in World War II.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 1942

When daybreak comes we are well on our way out to sea with land no longer visible. Our small convoy of eight ships finds its number increased in the afternoon when three huge Army transports loom up on the horizon, headed directly for us. They are former Grace liners, Uruguay, Argentina and Brazil; each about 25,000 tons and used exclusively for transporting troops, unlike ourselves who are combat ships.

THURSDAY AND FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 19 AND 20, 1942

Sea is a bit choppy.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 1942

Sea really begins to kick up after fueling of destroyers, one on either side of tanker. During this evolution we slow down to about five knots per hour.

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 22, 1942

0650—Mass in Junior Officers' Wardroom; crowded with about 70 present.

1000—General Service in NCO Mess. Largest attendance since I came on the ship. We are growing. The first Sunday total number of non-Catholics two, then five, now eighty. I gave them a Catholic sermon without the word "Catholic."

1530—Rosary and Benediction. I am sure Our Lady is pleased with the mixture of Scotch, Irish, Cockney and Yankee dialects making answer to the first part of her Hail Mary.

Ocean really boisterous, in fact boiling today, whipped by a 20 mile wind that we push up to 35 by our speed. Shrouds are constantly moaning; everything is securely lashed both inside and on the weather decks.

Sea is alive with white caps and waves that rise to a crest of 30 odd feet. Foam lashed off the tops by the wind forming rainbows on every side of us. Suddenly

a three-decker rainbow colors the sky in the west where we could see a rain squall a short while ago. Ships on every side rolling and pitching violently. Chenago, aircraft carrier, taking water on the nose of her flight deck; tanker shipping water regularly. We, I imagine, are like the ship in front of us. When her bow plunges down, her stern rises high and the propeller, apparently angry at being lifted out of her element, lashes out blindly for the sea that wouldn't stay altogether with her and white spray is thrown five feet on all sides.

The piece-de-resistance is furnished by the Chaplain [Foley] at dinner. We had been sliding a little bit in our chairs which were not lashed to the deck. Whenever we felt a move coming, we held onto the table until the roll stopped, but for this one there was no warning. Dr. Harris asked the Chaplain for the bread. The Chaplain had just finished putting a piece of white turkey in his mouth. With the other hand he picked up the dish of bread to pass it. Then, the roll. We slid to the portside, three feet, myself and the tailman, then a long ride of fifteen feet to the starboard. All had grabbed something by this time except the Chaplain. I set sail again for the portside, holding out a loaded dish of bread in one hand, trying to make a sale, and armed with a fork in the other. "Look at the Chaplain," I heard as I went sailing by the customers! Then my ride was over.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 26, 1942

Thanksgiving at sea. Catholic Mass at 0700. Standing room only. Congregation—Yanks, English, Irish, Scotch.

1000—General Service. Congregation the same; standing room only.

Dinner. Rough sea like a street on a windy day when the snow is falling, streaks of snow everywhere, not an even blanket. Streaks of foam; combers breaking all over the face of the ocean. Spray whipped off the crests lashes me in the face as I look over the starboard side. Forty winks. Visit to the wounded. Instructions to two potential converts.

Sermon: “Today, men, is Thanksgiving Day. This morning we are gathered together here to take part in a service of gratitude to Almighty God for the blessings He has bestowed upon us.

“Although at first sight it may seem that out here on the Atlantic, 1100 miles from home, our little service is slight and inconsequential but that is not the case. It would be if we were alone but we are not. By prayer, the strongest of bonds, we are united to countless other services being held all over the globe, at home and abroad.

“At home in our own country, the memory of Thanksgiving is being renewed in every section. The day has been consecrated to prayer by our President. So in the majestic cathedrals and modest churches back home, our mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters, wives and sweethearts and friends are raising their voices in song and prayers of Thanksgiving. Perhaps they are worrying, wondering how we are faring, little dreaming that their fervent prayers have stood us in good stead.

“Abroad, wherever American soldiers are stationed, on ships of our Navy at sea, divine services are being held. For the first time in history, Thanksgiving ceremonies are being conducted in Westminster Abbey with an American Chaplain presiding. Aboard ship, we too render homage to God and join with all those services everywhere. Our prayers do not ascend to the white throne of God as single, isolated fragments but as part of a mighty host of prayer, welling up from hundreds of thousands of hearts all over the world in Thanksgiving.

“As one of the Officers remarked this morning, ‘We indeed have much to be thankful for.’ The personal blessings that God has conferred upon us, we alone know their number. What they are is a sacred secret between us and our Creator, but we do know that deep down in the sanctu-

ary of our hearts where we walk alone with God, where no man treads without intruding, that the protecting arm of God was not foreshortened. One and all of us can look back upon moments when we were intimately aware that God was with us, moments either of the remote or of the recent past—as recently as two months ago or two weeks ago.

“Some among you now listening to the sound of my voice looked death in the face for six harrowing days and five nights in small lifeboats on shark-infested waters. Death stared at you and passed you by – for others. Others among us apparently had a rendezvous with their last hour when landing upon Mehdia Beach and after landing upon it. Yet death stared at them, too, and passed them by—for others.

“Those of us left aboard ship know that we were enveloped by God’s protection. It was there for all to see it. Shells whined aft of us, over us, and off our forecandle. They fell all around us from coastal guns. Yet not one hit its target.

“Now go back, for a moment, to that historic day when we steamed out of Hampton Roads on our way at last to open up the much-heralded second front. If any man had ventured to predict that we would return home with our ship intact, except for the loss of a few boats, and more wonderful by far, with our crew unharmed, he would have been labeled “crazy” for ignoring the percentages of modern warfare. Yet here we are—ship and personnel intact.

“The same cannot be said of other ships and their personnel. If I may be pardoned for injecting a personal note, I buried sailors from other ships. I have conducted funerals before as an ordained ambassador of God but never shall I forget the service on the top of the hill next to Fort Mehdia. The Armistice had been signed a few hours before. A number of bodies were hastily collected. I faced them, the

long row of them. Beyond them I could see our ship and her sisters peacefully swinging at anchor out on the broad Atlantic. The time was one o'clock. The day was beautiful with a clear, blue sky overhead and warm with Moroccan sunshine. On my right, 50 Arab prisoners of war who had been digging the graves. On my left, our own American boys – comrades of the fallen. The age-old prayers for the dead, always moving in their simplicity began:

“May the Angels receive you into Paradise;
May the Martyrs take thee at thy coming;
May thou, with the once poor Lazarus,
Have rest everlasting.

“I am the Resurrection and the Life.
He who believeth in me, even though
He be dead, shall live,
And everyone Who liveth and believeth in
Me, Shall not die forever.

“Eternal rest grant to them, o Lord,
And may perpetual light shine upon them.
May their souls and the souls of all the
faithful departed,
Through the mercy of God, rest in peace.
Amen.

“Taps were sounded and when the last note had died away, the final blessing was given to our heroic dead. They lie buried on the crest of that hill looking out over the broad reaches of the restless Atlantic, toward country, home, friends, and those near and dear to them for whom they gave the last full measure of devotion. God, we may be sure, is mindful of their sacrifice. He is mindful, too, of the honored

dead of our allies, soldiers, sailors, and members of the merchant marine. We pause to pay them all our meed [share] of tribute and remember them in our prayers where prayers count most, at God's altar.

“In the words of Scripture, ‘They had girded themselves, they were valiant men, they were ready against the morning – they had fought the good fight, they had finished their course, they kept the faith.’

“What of us? We must make certain that we, too, have girded ourselves with the double bond of loyalty to God and to country that we may be valiant men in the discharge of our duty to both, that we may be ready against the morning when the white tremendous daybreak of eternity dawns for us. We must also bend every effort to fight the good fight, to finish our course, to keep the faith. Then, and only then, are we making the best possible return to Almighty God for the blessings and favors that He has showered upon us. He will know that our thanksgiving is not an empty, hollow phrase, but a sincere, honest expression of gratitude that rises straight from hearts of men whose lives are a living confirmation of what they profess with their lips.”

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 1942

HOME, NORFOLK, VA.!!! Minus four ships that went East with us – they are now filed in Davy Jones's locker. Thank you, Lord, for bringing us safely back again. We, indeed, have much to thank you for! Thank you, Lord, again, for a safe 7000 mile round trip.

What a Trip!!!

MONDAY, DECEMBER 14, 1942

In port at Army Base, Norfolk, Virginia; ship is moored to the dock. I go ashore to secure some sheet music for our musicians and have dinner in the City Market. Imagine Faneuil Hall Market [in Boston] in one big cement building. At one end of it is a lunch counter. “This will be a good place for me to get a fine steak.” Girl, “No steak, but you buy it and we’ll cook it.” To the man at the meat stand in back of me, “I want a good steak.” T-bone, one pound, \$.65. Back to the counter with it, wrapping and all. “Here it is.” “What else?” “One raw onion, tomatoes, mashed potatoes, a glass of beer, dessert – apple pie and two big scoops of ice cream.” Best steak I have had in Norfolk in a blue moon. Happy surprise! Frank MacDonald, S.J., one of our passengers. “Goodbye” at BC., now he shows up as Chaplain of the CBs.⁶²

Young sailors; an 18 year old taking his first shave; boys standing around, kidding him. “Just put a little cream on your whiskers and let the cat lick it off.”

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 16, 1942

Nine days before Christmas we leave the Army Base, anchor out in Hampton Roads on a morning harshly raw, grey and cold; in the afternoon, snow falls. First time for Kendrie, a Southerner. Scoops it up with delight.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 17, 1942

We begin the first lap of our second cruise. Heave up the anchor at 0830 on a bright, crisp December morning; temperature about 35 degrees. Sun is shin-

ing in clear sky but coldly. It is too far down in the sky. Our passengers this trip different from the last. Then they were assault soldiers; Commandos and Rangers. These are Construction Battalion men, not Army. They are an older group; men who had already established themselves as machinists, welders, divers, electricians, etc. They line the decks as did the last passengers. For the large majority, this is their first ocean trip. As I go topside with some of their Officers to identify for them the landmarks on the Virginia shore and Cape Charles, Delaware, I speak to some of the enlisted men. Ask them how they feel as we get underway. Reply, “This is what we have been waiting for.” “What kind of sailors will you be?” “That’s what we are wondering about, too.” “Well, we’ll find out shortly.”

Within ten minutes we have passed through the submarine nets, pulled back by their little tenders on the north and south side. The order comes from the bridge: “All hands wear life belts.” Once more we are on our own, with destroyers on ahead of us, in Indian file, seven of them. We too are steaming out, Indian file, the second of the ships in our division, following the USS Allen, our flagship. We are making about 15 knots with the rudder pushed over hard to port and to starboard alternately, as we weave through the minefield. At the end of an hour, the destroyers fan out into picket lines on either side of us. We pick up a cruiser and an aircraft carrier, her flight deck loaded down with planes. The USS Chenango is the same one that travelled with us to Africa last month.

⁶² A reference to Naval Construction Battalions, commonly referred to in writing as the “Seabees.”

By the way, this is [one month since] we left Casablanca. We have a feeling that it will be much longer than a month before we see home again, if ever.

As we stand up forward on the flying bridge, the edge on the sharp wind is knifing into us. One of the doctors, a Southerner, can stand it only a short time and goes below.

We guess where we are going. Consensus of opinion is that we are headed for the South Pacific, New Caledonia. Chief Jenkins has a hunch that we are on our way to Ascension Island in the South Atlantic which he visited some years ago. Wherever it is, these men will not have to fight for their landing beaches as did the last passengers. Our cargo this trip is not ammunition, aerial bombs, tanks, jeeps, half tracks, etc. We could build a city with what we have on board. Cement mixers, cranes, derricks, bulldozers, lumber, etc.

We head directly east and follow the buoy-marked channel for 60 miles, while the destroyers keep tabs on any marauders of the deep that may decide to send a “fish” into us.

After dinner I notice one of the CB’s leaning his head against the Welin davit.⁶³ Ask him if he is seasick. “Yes, sir.” “That’s too bad; sorry to hear it. How does it feel?” “It makes you feel as though you don’t want to stay alive.” Others are leaning over the rail parting company with their meal. Their look alone would generate sympathy from the oldest seadog aboard. Seasickness, as somebody once described it: “The first day you’re afraid you’re going to die, the second day you’re afraid you won’t die, and the third day you don’t care whether you

die or not.” The afternoon continues cold, the winter sun sets and the bugle plays the “Darken Ship” melody. At the evening meal, some of the officers who are passengers are conspicuous by their absence. Seasickness is no respecter of persons.⁶⁴

In the evening, in the wardroom, two movies are shown. *How War Came*, propaganda film, worthless.⁶⁵ And an educational picture on Tracer Firing, actual shots taken aboard the HMS Excellent during attacks by Heinckle dive bombers on this ship. At their conclusion, I go topside before turning in and am amazed at the change in the weather. The temperature has climbed thirty degrees to 65. I go into the charthouse where Sutherland, QM1/c, tells me that we are 200 miles out to sea and close to the Gulf Stream and that the temperature of the water is 72 degrees. Now our course is directly south.

Fr. Frank MacDonald, S.J., Chaplain of the CB’s is sick! May have to put him ashore at first port touched.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 18, 1942

Second day out.

0650—General Quarters. All hands don life jackets; to battle stations one hour before dawn. Thick weather; ship rolling and pitching. Off Cape Hatteras.

0750—Secure from General Quarters. I celebrate Mass in the Library.

0830—Reading my Office in my room, starboard side, which is four decks above the water line. Suddenly a crash of thunder against the side of the ship, a splintering roar and water pours through my porthole. Torpedo hit? No, thank God. We shipped a big wave. Boat

⁶³ A davit is a small shipboard crane used for such purposes as raising and lowering lifeboats. The Welin Lambie company, based in England, was (and remains) a leading manufacturer of davits.

⁶⁴ Darken Ship is the order to close off all light that could be seen by an enemy.

⁶⁵ Produced by Columbia Pictures in November 1941, *How War Came* is a brief animated documentary in which Mel Blanc, who voiced Bugs Bunny, Porky Pig, Daffy Duck and hundreds of other cartoon characters, provides the voice for Hitler. It was nominated in 1942 for an Academy Award for “best Short Subject.”

swung outboard and the Welin davit is smashed, her portside stove in against the second boat in the nest. Water is cascading over the side from the deck. Members of the 2nd Division rush to the spot to secure her before she becomes a total loss. Soon they have her lashed securely to the other boat and to the rail. Men lying stunned on the deck; two injured by water that flung them against the bulkhead.

Weather is really rough. CB's are seasick on every side. My room boy, Godwin, is sitting in a corner, picture of dejection; smiles wanly as I ask him, "Has it hit you again?" He had had a bad cruise on the way to Africa. "Yes, sir." "How do you feel?" "I got misery in my stomach again."

Walking around the ship on the stern are the hardy members of the Seabees, enjoying the mountainous sea right on the fantail. Suddenly we all duck. A big wave breaks right on our starboard quarter. We don't take her aboard but we are showered by spray. Intermittent rain squalls with beautiful rainbows on every side. This is Cape Hatteras in winter. Old seagoing chief tells me that Limey sailors have a saying that "If you get by Bermuda in winter, watch Hatteras."

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 19, 1942

Third day out.

Heavy seas still running. Many passengers stay below deck, lying on their bunks hoping that mal de mer will stop plaguing them.

1145—Tables all set in Officers' Wardroom. Suddenly a tremendous roll; every dish and piece of silverware and glass is sent crashing to the deck. Imagine going into a china store and tipping over a dozen showcases packed with crockery and you have some idea of the racket.

The Plan of the Day carries a notice for the first time that a party is on tap when the ship crosses the Equator. Hosts will be shellbacks, sailors who

have already crossed the line and been initiated into the SOLEMN MYSTERIES OF THE DEEP; guests, victims rather, the uninitiated, the Pollywogs.⁶⁶

NOTICE

ALL YE POLLYWOGS BEWARE FOR ON THAT DAY KING NEPTUNIS REX, RULER OF THE RAGING MAIN WITH DAVEY JONES, HIS MAJESTY'S SCRIBE, THE ROYAL SCRIBE, THE ROYAL JUDGE, THE ROYAL DOCTOR, THE ROYAL DENTIST, THE ROYAL BARBER, THE ROYAL UNDERTAKER, THE ROYAL QUEEN AND HER TWO ROYAL BABIES AND THE REMAINDER OF THE ROYAL PARTY WILL INITIATE YOU INTO THE SOLEMN MYSTERIES OF THE ANCIENT ORDER OF THE DEEP. FROM NOW ON ALL YE TRUSTY SHELLBACKS OBSERVE THESE SCUM OF THE EARTH, THESE LANDLUBBERS, POLLYWOGS, MARINES, AND WHAT YE HAVE, AND TURN IN THE CHARGES YOU PREFER AGAINST THEM TO THE ROYAL SCRIBE WHO WILL PRESERVE SAME UNTIL THE DAY OF RECKONING. THE DAY OF RECKONING.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 20, 1942

Fourth day out. Enroute to Panama.

Plan of Day nominates me for special duty.

NOTICE: One of the foremost and holiest pollywogs on board, namely, Chaplain Foley, was overwhelmingly nominated to compose the "POLLYWOG THEME SONG" which all Pollywogs will be requested to sing to the tune of "How Dry I Am" before the august presence of the great Father of the Sea "King Neptunis Rex." Of course, the penance to be administered for failing to learn the words of this song is withheld for obvious reasons:

I'm a pollywog,
A low pollywog
How low I am,
No shellback knows.

I grunt and groan,
I sweat and moan,
How much I moan,
No shellback cares.

⁶⁶ Ceremonies that mocked pollywogs—sailors who were crossing a latitude line for the first time—were well-established by the 18th century.

He breaks my back,
My spine's a crack
Despite the fact,
No shellback cares.

He thinks he's comical,
When he's anatomical,
He whacks my fanny,
Till I ain't got any.

A shellback's tough,
He boasts he's rough,
There'll come a day,
He'll cry "Enough."

I'm a pollywog,
A low pollywog,
How low I am,
No shellback knows.

Weather moderates; beautiful summer day, sunshine streaming down on us, a West Indian sun. At night full moon under Southern skies. Back home, folks are hustling along the street trying to keep warm by walking briskly. They are standing on the corner wondering if the bus will ever show up. They shift from foot to foot, clap their hands together and here we are, walking around the deck in summer khaki clothing, sleeveless sport shirts. Mr. Oleson, First Lieutenant, old merchant marine captain, blonde, blue-eyed Norwegian, tells me of Pat, the dog on one of his ships. Ugliest face in creation; always assaulted newcomer to ship with unbounded display of affection; weighed about 100 lbs. Meanwhile an apologetic stump of tail wagged furiously. Newcomers mortally afraid of him. Boatswain's Mate came aboard one night; dog made for him, picked up chair to protect himself. Oleson, "He won't bite you; look at his tail." "Am I going to believe his tail or his face?"

Talk: This morning, men, is the most eventful day in your lives. For many of you it marks

the first time that you are attending the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass in a setting that must seem strange to you at first sight. Instead of kneeling on the steady deck of a shore chapel, you are kneeling on the rolling deck of our ship and perhaps you wonder whether it is you or the deck that is rolling.

Yes, our setting is a simple one, yet most impressive in its simplicity. It is true that we have no expensive stained glass windows breaking our bulkheads, only the bow and stern and the sides of invasion boats. We are open to the blue ocean on both our starboard and port sides. It is true also that our altar background is not some costly marble hewn from a famous quarry but only steel plates. And as we look forward we see no slender columns soaring aloft, carrying on their strong shoulders tons of masonry. We see only massive kingposts adorned with guys and cargo booms hugged close to them. It is true also that overhead we see no vaults lined with delicate stone tracery. Yet we have the blue canopy of God's sky which no architect can rival. He can only hope to copy it. Yet the very simplicity of it brings us closer to God as those of our ship's company will testify and best of all, Jesus Christ, true God and true man, feels perfectly at home in this setting.

He is one with us for we should remember that sometimes we are inclined to forget that He also went down to the sea in ships. He chose men who wrested a hard living from the depths of the sea to be the first members of His Apostolic Company. To St. Peter, a fisherman, He said, "Follow Me and I will make you a fisher of men." He knew what it was to sleep on the fantail of a ship. He knew what it was to feel a ship roll and pitch under him on the surface of Lake Gennesaret⁶⁷ in Galilee, a huge inland sea, that was no lily pond

⁶⁷ A place name applied in the New Testament to a stretch of land at the northwest corner of the Sea of Galilee; in Luke, the name is also applied to the body of water itself.

but a body of water where storms rushed and whipped down from the mountains, lashing thousands of white horses and made old hands like Peter cry out, “Lord, save us or we perish.” Christ also mustered men for His ship’s company like St. Paul who knew the privations and hardships of duty ashore and afloat even to the point of being shipwrecked three times. Yes, Christ is no stranger to our way of life. But the question arises, “Are we strangers to His way of life? To Him?” That question was put and answered in the days of Christ by one who said, ‘He stood right in your midst and you didn’t know Him.’

He was a plain, blunt man, John the Baptist. He spoke straight from the shoulder. He was not brought up in the lap of luxury but in the dust of the desert; his rations were locusts and wild honey. Since he was the man who was to introduce Jesus Christ, the Savior for whom the world was sorely waiting, he prepared himself by long years of solitary prayer and meditation in the desert. Then when all men were on the tip-toe of expectation, John suddenly appeared and delivered his message and the burden of that message was the need of repentance. “Make ready the way of the Lord.” At this time of year shortly before the anniversary of the first coming of Our Lord, once again John’s message of preparing our souls for the appearance of Jesus Christ is put before us for our sober consideration and the best way today as then is repentance.

Repentance. What is it? Fundamentally, it is a change of heart, leading to a reformation of life. A man looks into himself and asks himself a question, ‘How do I stand with God?’ He hears God asking him the question, ‘Is your heart right with mine as mine is with yours?’ And by a right heart God means a good heart. For a heart is either good or bad in the sight of God. If it is a good heart, then it is a stranger to mortal sin, that deadly enemy of the

soul that lurks on every side to torpedo it on its voyage to eternity.

Thank God for it, if our heart is a good heart and has avoided the enemy; remember here as elsewhere eternal vigilance is the price of safety. If the heart is a bad heart, then unfortunately, mortal sin has sent its deadly destructive message home into it and the soul has sunk to the bottom of the ocean of life. But unlike the sinking of other ships, this sinking is not permanent for the soul can be raised and be built as good as new by Jesus Christ, the Carpenter of Nazareth. If only He is given a chance in the Dry-dock of Confession where the salvage operation takes place. Once He works on the soul, then it is ready again for another cruise much stronger and more certain of arriving safely at the harbor of eternity for Christ is on the bridge with it, directing its course.

We must have Christ, Our Lord with us on the bridge of our life. If we haven’t, then we are foolish indeed, no matter what our rank or rating. Some years ago I was stationed in a hospital acting as Chaplain. One of the patients in that hospital was a man who was slowly wasting away and who was also stone blind. After the noon hour when things were quiet, I used to drop in to pass the time of day with him for a few minutes. On this particular day I stayed for one hour while he rehearsed the story of his life. As I was leaving I asked him, “As you look back over your life have you any regrets?” He replied, “Yes, I have one regret. That regret is not because I didn’t know what it was to know success and fame and fortune; I drank deeply of all three. As a young man in my thirties, I tried every major murder case in my state. My name was on everybody’s lips so much that I was elected with a large majority to the State Legislature, and I was wealthy as men of this world measure wealth. But I was poor; I thought in my

pride that fame and success was due to my own unaided efforts. I said I have one regret. You are a young priest. Burn these words that I forgot into your soul and wherever you go tell my story. I forgot those words of Christ, “Without Me you can do nothing.”⁶⁸ Happily, before it was too late, before I met Him at the Judgment Seat of Almighty God, I saw the error of my ways and mended them. Wherever you go, Father, tell my story; I hope that it may jolt some men’s souls out of their indifference to the one person without whom they can do nothing.

“Without Me you can do nothing.” That is the stark truth. We can do nothing that counts for eternity, or for time for that matter, which has lasting value in the sight of God unless Jesus Christ is on our side, unless He is with us. And He is only with us when our heart is a good heart; when, as it were, it is afloat on the ocean of life and buoyant with His grace, not a torpedoed wreck on the bottom through mortal sin.

As we look forward to Christmas, the latest anniversary of His coming, let us make sure that it will be a memorable one, that it will live in our memories, not merely because we shall attend Christmas on the high seas but because this year we were closer to Him than ever before, because He found in our hearts, alive and warm, the welcome that, with His grace, was so conspicuous by its absence on the first Christmas morn.”

MONDAY, DECEMBER 21, 1942

Fifth day out.

We sight land at 1000; the land is Desecheo Island. We are passing through the Mona Passage. There are two passages on the way to Panama; Windward Passage between Cuba and Haiti; and Mona Passage

between San Domingo, the other end of Center Island, and Puerto Rico. Named Mona after the island at the southern end of it.

Distance so far: Norfolk to Bermuda—725 miles; Bermuda to Puerto Rico—950 miles; Puerto Rico to Canal—1060 miles. Total—2730 miles.

Landfall at 1000. Gibraltar-like island, rising sheer out of the sea, steep sides; hard to say whether inhabited or not.

Temperature: Summer; men picking up deep sunburns.

1230—Love, SC 2/c⁶⁹ has appendectomy. Sub alarm; General Quarters in the middle of it. Sub, 1000 yards off Montpelier, cruiser on our port, crash dived immediately. Destroyer sent back; stays there all night to keep her under so that she can’t catch up with us during the night.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 22, 1942

Sixth day out.

CB Mike Rice, 43 year old lay apostle, brings me a man who has been away from the Church for quite some time. He introduces him with the following words, “Father, this is Jimmy. I just did a greasing job on him. Now you give him a change of oil.”

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 23, 1942

Seventh day out.

Dark plottings by the shellbacks who intend to scalp us as we cross the Equator.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 24, 1942

Christmas Eve. Eighth day out.

We arrive at Cristobal, Panama, about three o’clock; two jetties protecting the harbor. Sailor and I remark on the four shades of blue that stand out distinctly. The blue

⁶⁸ John, 15:5

⁶⁹ Ship’s Cook, Second Class

of the cloudless sky; the blue of the Montpelier, the cruiser; the blue of the sea; and the blue of our ship. All the same color but strikingly different shades.

First reaction to the sight of Panama, after the heat, is the luxuriant growth of the vegetation. The low hills are densely covered with trees and underbrush. The color is the greenest of the green.

I go ashore to pick up some things for the Crew's Mess. Streets are palm-lined. Houses are roofed with red tile. Walk down the main street. Stores are set back from the curb stone; all have pillars supporting the second deck that in turn is supported by pillars resting on the curb. All the stores protect themselves from the heat by awnings that carry all the colors of the rainbow. Houses are like New Orleans French Quarter. Call on St. Joseph's Church. Fr. Mischotti is fixing up the altar; mutual introduction; informs me that three other priests are from Boston, all Vincentians.

1:30—When I disembarked, stores closed for afternoon siesta.

2:00—Bustle of excitement; streets come to life. Taxis cruising up and down, guitars making loud gay music, voices rising and falling in harmony, high laughter on a corner. One colored man is threatening to whip another with a strap that he waves menacingly in his hand.

Church is second floor; big hall. Colored youngsters running around, having a high old time.

Street scenes: Woman balancing a basket that must have been her own weight dexterously on her head. Huge Negro sitting before a pile of coconuts, slashing them open with a murderous looking machete and eating the small nut about the size of an egg. Then draining the watery colored fluid into a bucket. Madames, over-rouged and underdressed, shamelessly sitting outside houses, soliciting their customers; love for a price.

We are to transit through the world famous Canal built between 1904 and 1914. The Canal Zone is 500 square miles, 50 miles long and 5 mile strips of cleared land on either side. Water of Canal: 85 feet above sea level; 35 miles fresh; 15 miles salt – 8 on the Atlantic and 7 on the Pacific. Width of Canal: 300 feet at its narrowest; 1000 feet at its widest. Location: Directly south of Pittsburgh. Locks: From Atlantic end. Lake Gatun, largest artificial lake in the world; 164 square miles. Pedro Miguel, Miraflores, Chagres River, a torrential, tropical stream fills Lake Gatun.

General Gorgas, Army Doctor. Yellow fever and malaria decimated the workers; new arrivals heard of deaths and sought immediate passage home. Panama changed by him from the pesthole and death trap of centuries into the healthiest area on earth. Today its death rate is lower than New York's. How? By killing off the female mosquito, "Little Fly," and setting up 25 sanitation districts. Man in charge had 20 to 100 laborers. Their work? At first, one mile territory on either side of the Canal, cut brush within 200 yards of all dwellings, drained standing water, trimmed grass a foot high. Why? Because mosquito easily destroyed by wind and sunlight; sought grass and foliage for protection.

The Pacific end of the Canal is 20 miles east of the Atlantic end. How explained? Well, the Isthmus runs northeast and southwest and the Canal runs more nearly north and south than east and west. Fifty miles long, extends from Limon Bay on the Caribbean to Balboa on the Bay of Panama. Canal Zone: Owned and governed by the United States, but political sovereignty technically remains in Panama. The Canal shortens the distance between New York and San Francisco by 8000 miles.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 25, 1942

Christmas. Ninth day out.

Midnight Mass in the Officers' Wardroom at 0000. Altar looked lovely with my mother's poinsettias in Christobal vases that she will eventually have when we get near home again. Choir did marvelously well

singing the old hymns that are traditional for Christmas. Silent Night, O Holy Night, Hark the Herald Angels Sing. Standing room only, 250 at the Mass, Catholics and non-Catholics.

2:30 A.M.—To bed after my second Mass, but not until visit to topside; full tropical moon directly overhead.

3:00 A.M.—Underway, in transit through the Canal. Slowly following the markers, white circles with black crosses on them, all in pairs. Ship keeps its nose pointed at the pair until it sees only one circle; then it knows it is on the right course. Water is a dirty brown color.

8:30 A.M.—Pass Army encampment along the shores and Officers' homes. Folks line their piazzas and banks of the Canal to greet us. I organize a "Merry Christmas to You" greeting up at the port gun station, and we sing until the echo bounces back from the hills. Drop a lot of green ice cream scoops all over the place for an idea of the landscape. We weave in and through them, and the locks, of which there are three.

We see for the first time the "rubber cows," the balloon barrage in the sky. At one lock I count 42 of them. They look like silver fish pinned against the sky permanently. I remark to an Officer beside me, "What a picnic a youngster would have here with a BB rifle." High poinsettia trees.

At some places you would be able to dive off our ship and make the shore in one scoop, only about twenty feet away. One place, Culebra, cut, gouged out sides of the hills which tower over us as we steam through. High, soggy temperature of about 110 in the sun; 85 by check on shaded thermometer on the bridge.

10:00 A.M.—General Service. At the end I am told that a photographer has taken some colored movies of the Service. I am happy to learn of it, but ask him to take some of my Mass which follows immediately. He does; a Christmas gift that I think I shall always cherish, but I don't get the film. Security rules prevent it!!!

12:00—Christmas dinner with all the fixings.

4:00—To the USS Allen for Rosary and Benediction, on the invitation of Lt. Hackett and Lt. Franceski, USMC. Delighted to give men the opportunity of having some Service on Christmas Day. We are now at the Pacific end of the Canal, Balboa.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 26, 1942

Tenth day out.

Shove off from Balboa at 1000, after being tied up at dock. Directly behind it, a towering hill with a little radio station atop of it.

We swing around after five subs go out first. As ship carrying the "Flag," alias "Admiral," we break out his ensign.⁷⁰ Start out Indian file as usual. Five transports and cargo ships, plus the Montpelier and the Chenango, the aircraft carrier that lost a plane that plummeted into the sea the day before we arrived at the other end of the Canal. Scouting ahead of us are MTPs.⁷¹ They roar by us as if we have thrown out both of our anchors. One CB remarks that he would give half of his remaining years for the opportunity of shipping aboard one of them for duty. Most sailors are like that; they want duty that is most dangerous. The bigger the spice of danger, more desirous they are for it.

I am puzzled by the land that is on our starboard side. I thought that since we were slipping down the coast of South America that the land should be on the port.

⁷⁰ Flag flown at the stern of a ship.

⁷¹ The MTP, or Motor Torpedo Boat, was a British Navy vessel. Foley, however, was certainly referring to Patrol Torpedo Boats, generally called PT boats, and an American craft.

Then I look at a map and find that we are in the Gulf of Panama and we are hugging its northern shore. The picture as we steam along: green mountains capped with white clouds, soft lazy veils across the sky.

Occasionally, a little mountain about 200 feet high that once decided to go in swimming and found itself permanently attached to the floor of the sea. Rich colors all around us; deep green of the mountains, the blue of the sky, of our ships, of the water, and of the dive bombers.

At 2:00 three of them, our own, thank heaven, come in upon us with all throttles wide open. They are giving gun practice to our men. I am standing on the flying bridge, just above the bridge deck as the first one comes in. He has leveled off about 200 yards away, shut off his engines, heads straight for the bridge deck at a blinding speed of 300 miles an hour. Officer in charge of gun crew, upon receipt of signal from gunnery officer, "Fire! Let 'em have it." But the nose of the plane seems to me an amazingly small target, which it is. The plane is apparently coming straight at us, then about 50 yards from us, rises sharply, soars over our heads, almost directly, banks quickly, gone. #2 roars in the same way, and also #3. Speed is so fast that gunners have only about three seconds to hit them. First they came over the starboard; next trip they come from port-side, parallel with the ship. Planes seem almost alive as they bank and turn and dive and climb up into the blue summer sky, join up and then turn again for another attack upon us. For half an hour we are treated to all the realism of an all-out bombing attack without the live bombs.

3:00 P.M.—Convoy lanes form up and we are the leader in the center of the three lanes. The ocean is Pacific. The ship has not even the slightest roll or pitch. Incredibly calm. Now see why she rates her name. Even the Mystic River near Medford Square is rougher than this surface.

First Pacific sunset. First, yellow color, then yellow warms into red, and the red flames into gold. Cloud formation, a cathedral, on the right, with not merely

its two spires but its whole body bathed in the glory of the setting sun.

One of the Officers, a non-Catholic, informs me that he attended Midnight Mass, as he has done for years. Wrote to his wife and two youngsters and told them that he was united to them as in the past, for they always went to Midnight Mass together. Ended letter by saying that he hoped they didn't miss him as much as he missed them.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 27, 1942

Eleventh day out.

Norfolk to Canal—2700 miles. Now 600 miles out from Canal; 6999 miles to go. What a trip!!!

Fr. MacDonald celebrates Mass at 6:45 Upper Deck Aft. I have mine at 0900 and General Service at 1000. I kneel in the stern of Fr. MacDonald's congregation. He is not in the sunlight at the beginning of Mass. Then we make a hard port turn and the early morning sun plays on his red vestments, worn in honor of the feast of St. John. John, fisherman that he was, looked down from heaven with pleasure upon the setting, I am sure. Then we make a hard turn to the starboard six minutes later, and the sun has swung away also. Our zig-zag plan #43.

3:30—Rosary and Benediction.

In the evening songfest I lead the pollywog song. Pollywog: "A blob plus a tail." That's the name for us who have never crossed the Equator before. We are expecting heavy weather from the shellbacks when they bring us before King Neptune for judgment, come the day of initiation into the solemn mysteries of the sea.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 28, 1942

Twelfth day out.

Staging for Father Neptune is rapidly approaching completion on the boat deck forward. We pollywogs are evidently going to catch it properly. First Lt. Oleson wears a big, broad knowing grin every time

he meets me, breaks out into a hearty chuckle, and says, “I ain’t saying nothin’.” Wet stormy day; big run on the library.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 29, 1942

Thirteenth day out.

Day dawns fair and warm. We are presented with the Plan of the Day that carries the notice of the arrival of Davey Jones, advance guard for Father Neptune. Reads charges against pollywogs. First dose of punishment, five whacks on keel by pirate.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 30, 1942

Fourteenth day out.

Beautiful clear sky. Father Neptune arrives. Punishment for me: Step onto wooden griddle, electrified; made to kiss the Royal Baby, First Lt. Oleson; then sat in Royal Barber chair, upended into pool, clothes and all. Uniforms of Shellbacks: Long underwear, marked with skull and crossbones, slit dungarees, green pajamas, suspenders, green helmet, white collar and tie. Ended at noon.

3:40—We crossed the Equator, but we can’t see its green line.

1800—At supper ship shivers from stem to stern. Two depth charges go off from destroyer off port quarter, two miles away. She cruises around, fairly leaping out of the water with her 35 knots. Ten minutes later, four miles away, drops three more; then hovers around the spot where Hirohito’s men may be lurking.⁷²

Emergency turns—45 degrees. Blasts on horn to inform other ships in the convoy.

1:30—Five of our subs ghost through our lanes in opposite direction.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 31, 1942

Fifteenth day out.

Beautiful day, cloudless sky, warm. Incongruous note: Gas masks issued at 1100. New Year’s Eve, a bit of old time harmony is furnished in the Officers’ Mess by a quartet.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 1, 1943

Sixteenth day out.

All through the night blasts on ship horn; other ships answer like melancholy whistle of far off trains echoing back from the hills.

Tragic note: Cruiser Montpelier catapults her planes off in a routine scouting operation. One rises slowly, the other suddenly explodes about twenty feet in air and plummets into the sea. There is a terrific explosion as her two depth charges go off. Water sent high over the cruiser. Boat put over her side; rescues survivor and recovers pilot’s body.

In the afternoon, broadcast of the Rose Bowl football game.

Mike Rice, Pontoon Assembly Detachment, and I passing the time of day topside watching the sunset. Looks over to the Montpelier at the single plane at her stern under the catapult where there had been two until this morning and remarks, “She looks lonesome, Father.”

SATURDAY, JANUARY 2, 1943

Seventeenth day out.

Bad language from some Southerners during Mass on the Upper Deck Aft. My Apostle, Mike Rice, quietly but distinctly remarks to the group: “Quiet, please; Church Service going on.” Someone in the group retorted, “If you were paying attention to the service, you wouldn’t hear it.” After Mass is over, Mike, “Just came over to say that I was the man who asked for quiet. I heard that remark that was passed. Let the man come topside, put on the gloves, and we’ll settle the argument then and there.” Nobody moved.

⁷² The 124th emperor of Japan, Hirohito reigned from 1926 to 1989.

Southerners, incredibly ignorant, believe the most awful stories about us priests. Some of the Catholic men told us what they were. They are to be pitied, although at first the reaction of the Catholics to the stories is one of anger because they are so vicious. Some refuse to go to General Service for non-Catholics because it is run by a Catholic priest, “the guy with the nightgown on when he says his Mass,” as one of them put it. Ignorance like that is to be pitied and enlightened.

Burial at 2:30 P.M. of Ensign Thompson, pilot from USS Montpelier plane that crashed yesterday. All the flags are at half-mast on our convoy. Up on the flying bridge I borrow binoculars from one of the members of the gun crew. Men of the Montpelier are standing in close-packed ranks, facing aft, dressed in blue pants and white skivvy shirts. Honor Guard of Marines in khaki. Platform erected under the catapult where the plane and its pilot had taken off many times. Clear blue sky overhead; sun drenching the entire crew and officers. Prayers are being said over the corpse wrapped in national ensign [flag]. They end; three volleys crack out sharply on the summer Pacific afternoon, the canvas with its precious burden slides over the side and the waters of the ocean swallow up the weighted sack quickly.

Beside me a sailor remarks, “If I have to die, Chaplain, I hope that I will be buried at sea, and not on some forgotten island of the South Pacific; at least my wife can cast some flowers on the water back in San Diego.”

SUNDAY, JANUARY 3, 1943

Eighteenth day out.

First Mass at dawn, 5:45; Upper Deck Aft. Overhead the Dawn Patrol takes off from the USS Chenango scouting for any marauders of the deep that may be waiting for us. The overtone of their motors is now a commonplace musical background for Mass.

0900—Mass. Boat deck forward, with a canvas to break the wind blowing in from the portside.

1000 – General Service. About 300 present, jamming

every single corner of the deck. Sun streaming down on us makes us realize that it is mid-summer here. 3:30—Benediction and Rosary with the men.

MONDAY, JANUARY 4, 1943

Nineteenth day out.

The end of General Quarters came during Fr. MacDonald’s Mass at dawn this morning. When he came to the Consecration the ship made a sudden sharp turn to the portside so that our stern faced east. The sunlight caught Our Lord as He was raised on high for the adoration of the men. It seemed that the sun itself wanted to pay tribute to the One who hung it in the sky.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 5, 1943

Twentieth day out.

Preparations made for any burial that may have to take place aboard our ship. Platform is rigged on Boat Deck forward starboard side. Canvas sack is readied. Procedure for committal at sea determined. One case of spinal meningitis aboard; very sick man from Virginia.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 6, 1943

Twenty-first day out.

Feast of the Epiphany. Our Lord’s appearance to the Wise Men. Haunting music, soft tropical moonlight, palm branches caressed by trade winds. As yet we see no land. One of the men remarks that he would be happy just to be able to set foot on Tahiti for a minute. We are directly north of it, passing between the Marquesas Islands and the Tuamotu Islands, both French possessions. Tahiti is west of the latter group.

Flying fish on the road to Mandalay are sporting on all sides of us; some of them actually flying through the air for about 15 yards, then plunging into the ocean like a dive bomber.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 7, 1943

Twenty-second day out.

Gunnery practice. Strange how routine it can become. At first when a plane towed a white canvas

sleeve across the sky as a target for our anti-aircraft gun crews, we rushed topside to witness the accuracy of the crews. Now I am sitting in my room as the staccato bark breaks out on the Pacific morning air and continue to carry on a conversation with a man who is desperately homesick.

At 7 o'clock after dinner all hands on topside to have a look at two warships on the horizon. Fortunately, they give back the proper signals when they are challenged and then stay on their course which is northeast for Hawaii. They were a heavy cruiser and a destroyer.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 8, 1943

Twenty-third day out.

General Quarters at 0505. I went to bed last night at 2030; 8:30 P.M. for landlubbers. Apparently slept out, for I woke up at 0430, shaved, stepped out on deck in the early morning darkness and looked up to the bridge. Lookouts are peering out, dark forms outlined against the still starry sky that gradually loses its lights as the east begins to brighten. Sky lookouts and gun crews on highest decks are scanning their sectors. As I move among gun crews and through them, exchanging a good morning, they remark that there is no excitement yet; however, they are keyed up and waiting, their tenseness further sharpened by the rumor that swept the ship yesterday that in a big naval battle with Japs, we were on the receiving end.⁷³

I stand on the boat deck and watch the dawn. Only [Robert Louis] Stevenson, who spent some time in these islands, could describe what this dawn in the South Seas is like. He wrote somewhere: "The dawn – when darkness trembles into light and the stars are extinguished like the street lamps of some human city, when the whiteness brightens into silver, the silver into gold, and the gold kindles into pure and living flame and the face of the East is barred with elemental scarlet."

There are clouds along the horizon this morning, clouds and cloudlets. Where the sun will come up, there is long horizontal break in them. As the sun throws its light long distance into that break, it resembles a lake with its vivid blue waters. On its nearest shores are mountains, crested with snow, one towering high above all the others. Gradually the blue of the lake changes into gold. The rims of the mountains, even the lowest, are tremulous with orange, so tremulous that it seems that they must give way, too; but still the sun does not raise its head. Then its rim arches over the cloud's edge and another day has dawned. "Good morning" is the spontaneous greeting of the heart to the sun as it begins another day's journey.

I go down a deck to the upper deck, vest for Mass after reading part of the Divine Office. The lines in the hymn for Sext in the Office "Qui splendore mane illuminas."—"Thou who lightest up the morning with splendor, with glory" convey a meaning to me that they never had before.⁷⁴

Quietly the Mass proceeds; softly the little Mass bell rings out into the open air and the heads of my men and passengers are bowed in adoration as the One Who hung the sun in the sky is raised aloft after the Consecration.

Meanwhile the dawn patrol of two planes from the carrier *Chenango* roar by overhead, their lights now dimmed for it is day again. Another beautiful day, temperature about 85. Some of the men now brown as nuts from the tan they have acquired. I lay the keel for Sunday's sermon.

In the evening after chow, about 5 o'clock, songfest on the boat deck forward. As the ship rises and falls ever so gently, the voices of the men fill the soft Pacific night with the old favorites, "Carry Me Back to Old Virginia," "Old Black Joe," "I'll Be Down to Get

⁷³ A good example of "scuttlebutt." No such battle occurred. The Second Naval Battle of Guadalcanal took place on November 14 and 15, and was judged a decided American victory. No other major naval conflicts in the Pacific Theater took place later in 1942 or in the first week of 1943.

⁷⁴ The Latin phrase is from "*Rector Potens, Verax Deus*," a hymn for the Midday Office in the Roman Breviary.

You in a Taxi, Honey,” “There’s a Long, Long Trail A-winding,” “Into the Land of My Dreams,” etc. They continue singing as darkness falls. One of the ship’s crew remarks, “If homesickness were five cents a pound, those fellows would be wealthy.”

Nightfall under a South Seas moon. Sky is spangled with myriad stars, every available inch sown with them, not like any sky back home. Clusters and then other stars, but in an incredible number. Sky seems alive with them.

Off in the distance our convoy partners are steaming ahead silently under the January summer moon. It seems strange to write that combination, but we are down under the Equator.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 9, 1943

Twenty-fourth day out.

Go up on deck after General Quarters. Looks like a stormy morning. Sleepers out last night driven in at 0300 this morning. Sky overcast. Men cluster around the altar, wondering if rain will catch us before we can start the Mass. We venture it, though ominous clouds overhead. Mass is finished without them emptying their cargo.

After breakfast, topside; water a deep indigo blue from the storm clouds coming in massed array from the west. Not a white horse on the water anywhere. Off to the west rain is pouring down; it is foul weather over there. Heading in our direction, two planes streak by overhead. Standing just outside door talking to Ensign, one of our passengers who is trying to catch his ship. Talking about how serious a man becomes at sea, thinking thoughts which peace time distractions may have kept in the background. An enlisted man passes by and asks if it is a plane that has crashed into the sea off our starboard near the carrier. We join the group on the bridge. Yes, another crash. Borrow a pair of binoculars and train them on a destroyer. I raise my hands, giving absolution from a distance. Plane swerved in over the carrier, about to land when the pilot changed his mind, swept low over the sea and then spun in.

Through binoculars can vaguely make out in mist and rain the destroyer heading about and making back for scene of crash. Everyone hopes that the two-man crew has been saved. Message comes in about five minutes later; both pilot and radio man rescued. Meanwhile the other plane is hovering aloft, speeding through the mist and rain, trying for a spot for a landing. All eyes glued on her as she heads in over the flight deck, passes by, completes another circle, then tries again, makes it this time and everybody breathes a sigh of relief. Message comes through from destroyer that all hands aboard and unhurt.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 10, 1943

Twenty-fifth day out.

0425—General Quarters. “Man your Battle Stations”

Ship shrouded in darkness; a finger of light off on the horizon, identifying the east for us. Ships seem asleep, but tremendously alive. Every man intensely alert. Up in the Crow’s Nest, forward and aft, horizon lookouts scanning the distant verge. On the bridge, lookouts on the watch are ranging over each square foot in their assigned territories. Sky lookouts on the guns are peering overhead for anything that might suddenly drop down on us.

Crow’s Nest lookouts forward scan the horizon from 0 to 90 degrees, from 360 to 270 degrees. In other words, to the starboard beam and the port beam. Lookouts in the aft Crow’s Nest scan from 90 to 180 and from 180 to 270. Two lookouts in each one and the watch is two hours. This is a dangerous hour in the morning when subs can create a disaster in seconds. We are moving in our old formation, two lines of three abreast, with the aircraft carrier, Chenango, bringing up the rear. Three combat transports lead, while two cargo ships and the cruiser, Montpelier, complete the second line.

In the evening the sun starts to set about 6 o’clock; darkness falls down quickly from above. Songfest being held on the boat deck forward. Slender crescent moon lazily lying on its back hangs high just

off the forward mast on the portside. We make a sharp turn to port and the moon shifts to starboard.

Ensign Schula, with a voice that is a dead ringer for Lawrence Tibbett's,⁷⁵ sings tunes from Stephen Foster, "Beautiful Dreamer," etc., then arias from the operas. Greeted with tremendous applause. Meanwhile up on the bridge the watch and officers are scanning the waters.

MONDAY, JANUARY 11, 1943

Twenty-sixth day out.

Two months ago today I buried the sailors and soldiers at Port Lyautey in North Africa. Today I am in the South Seas, just about 500 miles from Samoa on the way to Noumea, New Caledonia. The Allen is about to leave us so her escort vessel, USS Taylor, comes alongside for her orders. She will shepherd the Allen to her destination, where her 1000 Marines will be unloaded.

Sea is a glassy calm, unbelievably smooth, as smooth as the birdbath in the garden back home.

This evening a visit to the Black Gang in the Engine Room. As I open the door, I am met with a withering blast of suffocating hot air. Deep below about forty feet is the deck of the Engine Room. Looking down, one sees nothing but a maze of ladders and catwalks. I seize the handrails on the ladder but quickly release my hold. They are scalding hot. Down the ladder I go, gingerly, into the bowels of the ship where I meet the chief. When I remarked about the heat of the handrails, he humorously remarked that he asked the men on watch if they had turned the steam on them. "What is the temperature of this engine room?" I ask him. He takes a look at the thermometer which reads 116 degrees.

The members of the watch, six of them, are dressed, or rather undressed, in dungarees, stripped to the waist with perspiration pouring from them as they obey the various signals from the bridge. These men

are the unsung heroes of the ship. They give their sweat every minute they are on duty. If the ship should be torpedoed, they will be the first to give their blood, for this engine room is the vital part of the ship. If the worst should come, they are hopelessly trapped. If the water doesn't get them, 400,000 pounds of live steam will. Down there, deep in the engine room, one becomes acutely conscious of how these men, above all others, are living on borrowed time.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 12, 1943

Twenty-seventh day out.

0450—General Quarters. "All hands man Battle Stations"

Mass as usual at the end of General Quarters on the Upper Deck Aft. Of the fifty who attend, about ten men receive Holy Communion. Splendid Catholics, these men, the pride and joy of their temporary Pastor.

Conversation with Dr. Arnold LaPierre, graduate of Sheffield, Yale and Columbia Medical School. Regrets his highly scientific, specialized training; too much science and too little of the literature of the ages.

Mr. Pound informs me that, although he has been 24 years in the Navy, this is the longest cruise he has ever taken.

Lt. Kreutzer's Beach Party is toughening its muscles for their next landing party; this time a battle with the Japs. When? He guesses that it will be in about six weeks. He is the ideal man to lead them into action. Absolutely fearless and courageous, not as a callow youngster, but as a man who has seen action as he did in Africa.

Africa. Yesterday, two months ago, I buried the first soldiers and sailors who died in the North African Campaign. May God have mercy on their souls. Nobody thinks of them now except their dear folks who received the short notice from the Government. Their buddies have gone on to meet a far fiercer foe

⁷⁵ Tibbett (1896–1960) was a star baritone with the Metropolitan Opera.

in Tunisia, and the shipmates of the sailors are now with us streaming for New Caledonia, also to battle a foe that is a formidable one, in capital letters.

If anyone doubts this, let him read the news in today's press release from the Radio Shack.⁷⁶ Yesterday Washington gave out the news that we have lost in the last three months, here in the Southwest Pacific, ten men o' war, as follows: one aircraft carrier, the Hornet; one heavy cruiser, the Northampton; two light cruisers, Juneau and Atlanta; and six destroyers, the Benham, Cushing, Barton, Laffey, Monseen, Preston and Walker. These ships were put to the bottom with equipment no stronger than peashooters and slingshots. I confess to a misgiving that we have been undermanned and undergunned ever since we started the offensive down under. Perhaps the tide will begin to turn now.

The acute problem of communications has been hammered home to us on this trip. Here we have been at sea since December 17 and have yet to arrive at our destination. In the same time, similar Jap ships can make approximately eight round trips. We are handicapped.

While reading one of the old Commonweal magazines, I learn that George M. Cohan died about three months ago. The news came as a start. Although I never had the good fortune to meet him in the flesh, I had the pleasure of seeing him act in a play in Boston about three years ago and once in the movies. Clean through and through, he would be like a breath of fresh air in the theaters and movie mansions of today. Westbrook Pegler wrote his epitaph when he concluded his column by saying that "He was too clean for the stage of today." A scathing condemnation of today's stage, playwrights, and actors and actresses. May the Lord have mercy on his soul.⁷⁷

Today the ship's company have two suits of whites dyed khaki to lessen their visibility for bombers. Little things

like this help to convey to all of us better than words that we are approaching one of the worst battle areas in the world.

At Quarters for Officers the other morning, the Executive Officer informed us that we have a hundred to one chance of coming out of our next battle operation alive. Lt. Commander Oleson expresses my sentiments when he comments, "Well, I have one chance, haven't I?" That remark is the key to his character; optimistic through and through, he never could be cast in the role of Jeremiah.

One of the enlisted men turns over \$200. to me for safe-keeping. I jolly him about how he managed to collect such a staggering amount in one month. His rejoinder, "I come by it honestly, Father." Then he remembers what a chief told them in boot camp when they got their first five dollar pay. "Spend one-third on women, one-third on liquor, and save the rest." Instructions like that are damaging, to put it mildly, perhaps diabolical is the correct word for it, for a youngster away from home for the first time. What strikes me is that, though he must have heard scores of talks in his boot days, this was one of the observations, granted that it may have been only a stray one, that stuck with him.

Chief Frank Gordiano from Springfield talks about the folks back home. We have in common one man who rode the crest of the wave of fame, fortune and success, then slipped back into the trough as he crossed into his fifties and finally died a poor man in a hospital. The chief remarks, "Well, Father, I have always said that it is a local on the way up, but an express coming down."

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 13, 1943

Twenty-eighth day out.

○○○○—USS Allen leaves us with the destroyer, Taylor, for her destination, to proceed on duty assigned, which happens to be Samoa.

⁷⁶ The room that housed a ship's communications equipment..

⁷⁷ Cohan (1878–1942) born Keohane to Irish immigrant parents, was a popular singer, dancer and playwright in vaudeville and on Broadway. Played by James Cagney, he was immortalized in the 1942 film *Yankee Doodle Dandy*.

0830— Just returned from the bridge. The Algorab⁷⁸ has taken the position vacated by the Allen, and the aircraft carrier, Chenango, slips in behind us.

Mr. Sebrell informs me that we missed some excitement last night. About twenty minutes to twelve a ship loomed up on the horizon off the port bow, unidentified. Three destroyers rushed over, formed a protecting screen and were poised to go into action within seconds when the ship revealed her identity. She proved to be a US Navy tanker, without escort.

Know now what is meant by the phrase, “As suddenly as a tropical shower.” Without warning, the clouds come on in massed array out of a perfectly blue sky, rush pell-mell along, empty themselves of their cargo, then are away as quickly as they arrive. Before leaving today, one of them put on a gala display of a three-decker rainbow.

Train the long glass on the aircraft carrier. On her portside forward make out a pilot seated on a chair reading. He apparently is the ready pilot, primed to take off at a split-second’s notice to scout or to fend off enemy planes.

Read in National Geographic magazine for July a description of New Caledonia. Must tell my mother about it in my letter.

New Caledonia. Its climate from May to December, mild like Florida in winter with average temperature of 72. December to April is cyclone season; temperature 65. Population: 53,000 of whom 5000 are grown white men. Island is about 250 miles long and 30 odd miles wide and is located about 750 miles north of Australia.

Mr. Oleson looks up into the sky and remarks, “Mares’ tails there mean that we will have a wind.” Starting at one o’clock, rains all day long.

8:15 P.M.—South of the Fiji Islands we listened to a radio station in Seattle, playing the “[“Song to the] Evening Star” from Tannhauser!

THURSDAY, JANUARY 14, 1943

Twenty-ninth day out.

0420—General Quarters, General Quarters, All Hands Man Battle Stations, All Hands Man Battle Stations!

Mass at 5:20 Upper Deck Aft, as usual. During Mass tropical shower without warning spills down on celebrant and parishioners.

Breakfast at 6 o’clock, then topside to flying bridge deck alongside of the Stack, lying in deck chair, letting the warm sun beat down on me. Morning is refreshingly cool after the rain of yesterday. Sky seems to have its face washed. Ahead of us two destroyers are scurrying back and forth across our bows like big water bugs as they shoot to port and then wheel around sharply, retrace their tracks, then double back and forth again, incessantly nervous.

Believe it or not, we actually loaned out our library’s prize volume, “How to Raise Chickens for a Profit.” A member of the Construction Battalion, former chicken farmer, wanted to check theory against practice.

FRIDAY AND SATURDAY, JANUARY 15 AND 16, 1943.

Thirtieth day out.

Crossing the International Dateline we lose a day. Friday is the casualty.

0435—General Quarters. My, but these are early hours. Dawn rises early here south of the Fiji Islands. Mr. Meyer predicted a few days ago that when we hit this part of the trip, we would strike weather that was really cool. It is, pleasantly so. Last night was a bright

⁷⁸ Like the *Clymer*, an attack cargo ship.

cool night, such as we would have back home in the Spring. Now I am curious to know what the temperature is this minute, so a halt while I go up to the bridge to find out. The thermometer reads 85, yet it doesn't seem to be that warm.

Remark overheard as I pass along the Main Deck where our passengers, Construction Battalion, Pontoon Division, are lined up for chow. "A lot of red water rushing down a gully in Georgia would look good now." It has been a long trip for men who are not sea-going sailors.

1130—General Quarters. Unidentified plane sighted on port horizon. Good news or bad? We wait to see, even though it may be thirty miles away. These planes can make 300 miles per hour, so that stranger, if stranger she is, would be on top of us in five minutes. It passes away.

1200—Aircraft carrier, Chenango, steams by us at full speed, about to send aloft six scout bombers. She moves so fast we are like an old Model T, while she is the latest Packard. By she steams, wheels to the port side into the wind. Up to the bridge I go to train the long glass to watch the maneuver closely. The first two planes she catapults off her crowded decks; ponderously and slowly they lift themselves like some giant bird a bit uncertain of itself. The others make the 20 yard run and then all six swing into formation and they are off on their assigned mission. An hour later they are back.

Destroyer Chevalier comes alongside to deliver mail from another ship, along our port quarter about 100 feet away. A rocket gun is fired from us to her, a miniature breeches buoy is rigged and the mail sack is hauled along the line by hand on a pulley. Meanwhile both ships are making 15 knots. The line is no help to either bridge to keep the ships on course. Bridge has to be keenly alert, for ships have a tendency to run together, closing the distance between them. The reason? Water between is travelling faster than the water outside.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 17, 1943

Thirty-first day out.

0455—General Quarters.

0555—Mass. Fr. MacDonald says this first Mass of our floating parish. He has a bad cold; started the cruise with one and finishes with one.

0900—Second Mass by yours truly. I compliment the men on their splendid example during the trip.

1000—General Service.

1530—Rosary and Benediction.

1630—Unidentified ship on the horizon. After one hour she uses her searchlight signal to inform us that she is the Santa Anna. The men on the bridge look her up and the information they have says that she is a ship of the Grace Line.

At table Mr. Kreutzer informs us that we are now members of the South Pacific Task Force and that eventually the following ships will join us: the Washington, the Indiana, the Idaho, the North Carolina, and that we will be formidable with them alongside of us!

Up on the bridge at nightfall. Tell the Captain how much I like the word of Departure that he gave a short while ago over the public address system to our passengers, CB's and PAD's. I tell him that, when he finished, the men spontaneously applauded as they stood in the chow line. He is naturally gratified that they liked it. The man shows long days and nights of anxiety that have been his lot since we left Norfolk on that cold, raw, snowy morning in December.

No man, officer or enlisted man, need have any fear about the safety of the ship while he is our skipper. May God grant him long life and permanent days with us.⁷⁹

⁷⁹ Captain Arthur T. Moen (1894–1962) was a 1917 graduate of the Naval Academy. He commanded the Clymer from December 1942 to October 1943, for which service he was awarded the Legion of Merit. He retired with the rank of rear admiral in 1948.

South Pacific Task Force

MONDAY, JANUARY 18, 1943

Noumea, New Caledonia.

0420—General Quarters. The earliest yet. Was I sleepy getting up at this hour!

0515—Mass as usual on the Upper Deck Aft. Quite gusty. Sky looks threatening but fortunately continues to only look so.

This day we make port. All hands on tiptoe of expectation as we steam ahead. About 1000 we have General Quarters, a sure sign that we are nearing our destination, even though we sight no landfall.

1100—Word runs through the ship like a prairie fire. “Land! On our starboard side!” Sight of the good earth again.

Just a short distance away, surf is breaking over the coral reefs. As the article in the National Geographic magazine for July described it, this island, New Caledonia, is surrounded by coral reefs that extend from one to ten miles off shore. We can see indistinctly mountains in the distance; even through the long glass they are vague.

At twelve we take the pilot aboard and snake our way up the channel to anchorage. On our port, a lighthouse, immaculate white on a little fifty-foot island. We turn back on our wake; on the south side of the island is the whitest sand we have ever seen and the greenest of water. Day is now sunshiny, clouds have burnt away and a pleasant breeze is blowing. Suddenly it gets very humid. The mountains apparently shut off the wind.

The mountains are intense purple in the distance, primitive looking, as though they were built at the very dawn of creation. One of the men standing up on the gun platform group #3 remarks: “They don’t believe in foothills here, Father.” First there are little mountains out wading in the sea. Then there are three tiers of them, the next higher than the one ahead of it. The last tier pushes its head up into the clouds. All of them look as though they were fashioned when the world was young. Another sailor, a CB this time, remarks, “You get mighty close to God looking at the tops of those peaks.” How do our passengers feel about their new home? One of them put it this way, “We have our job to do here and we’ll be happy doing it.”

We make our way in slowly for two hours. Now we can see the scenery at close range. The coastline is like a comb, cut in by innumerable inlets. As we skirt them, we note that ships are hiding around the hills at the mouth of each of them. We make our entrance into one of them. It is a narrow passage, only about 300 feet wide. Carefully we nose in, while searchlight signals are concentrating on us from four different places, two ships and two shore stations. We are amazed at the collection of shipping. First, about 30 freighters are counted. As we come by the two little hills rising sharply and standing guard at our inlet, we count many more, 28 in all, plus the 30 others. We now descry men of war, a big battlewagon, destroyers and minesweepers. Something is being built here alright. We had seen the same building up before we set out for Africa. May God be as good to us and as generous with His protection on our new mission as He was then – rather may we show ourselves worthy of His protection and care.

The mountains are sharp cones; not green in color but a slate-like brown. A PBV Martin Patrol Bomber cruises overhead, banks sharply against the backdrop of the mountain, then taxis into her berth after landing on the water.

The temperature is very humid, like Charleston, South Carolina, in July.

At 4:30 we anchor but nobody goes ashore. We find that we are in Noumea, New Caledonia. The town is nestled at the foot of the mountains. Red-tiled roofs and cream-colored stucco fronts to the houses, all of one and two stories. Impression from where we are is much the same as that of Panama, Colon and Cristobal.⁸⁰

We have travelled 10,300 miles since leaving Norfolk on December 17, 1942.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 19, 1943

Unloading of ship has been going on since we anchored last night. First batch of CB's and PAD's go ashore. I set foot on land at 9 o'clock, equipped with a box of apples, one of oranges and 100 pounds of sugar. Mr. McRae, our Communications Officer, informed me yesterday that he had been told that the Sisters who ran the local hospital would be glad for some fruit. I have two aims as I step ashore. First blessing the land, as is my custom whenever we hit a new beach. And I want to meet my brother Ed,⁸¹ and to help the Sisters. On the shore there are no docking facilities. We run the invasion personnel boat alongside of a temporary 10 foot wharf built by another detachment of CB's who have been here since November 11, 1942. A pile driver is hammering in piles as foundation for a future dock and cranes and bulldozers are doing the work that was meant for them.

I look around, speak to a couple of Marines in a truck, ask them if they will carry the box of apples and the bag of 100 pounds of sugar to the hospital

for me. No Marine ever says "no" to a priest, so off we go to the hospital. There I learn that it is run by the government, not by the Sisters who were kicked out by the government, and all are admitted "sans distinction." I take my two boxes with me, decide to give them to the priests that staff the Cathedral that was our guide as we came in yesterday.

Up we climb the hill to it in a truck. I find out from a barefoot Melanesian boy in the Church where the priests' house is, and the box of apples and the sugar are dumped in front of it. Meanwhile before going in, I make a visit to Our Lord in His New Caledonian home and I say the Stations of the Cross for my father. At the altar rail I whisper a prayer for all the family back home and all away from home.

The Cathedral is built of local sandstone, cruciform. And on an altar that was rebuilt lately, there are two dates, 1870 and 1914. The Church looks as though it was built on the earlier date. On the way out, the door frames one of the most beautiful scenes I have ever caught anywhere. As you start back from the altar you see only the ocean, just a couple of miles away. Then proceeding down the aisle, you suddenly notice that two little islands have come into the picture, the two through which we passed yesterday. As you walk nearer to the back of the Church, more islands swing into view, until finally standing on the porch you have the whole island at your feet. I repeat again the wish so often in my mind, "My kingdom for a camera."

I swing left to the priests' house in back, am introduced by the barefoot Melanesian boy and present my calling cards, apples and sugar. They are happy to receive both, invite me to dinner, but I want to see Ed as soon as possible. They press their invitation for today is the one meat day of the week, they say. "Why not take advantage of it with us?"

⁸⁰ The city of Noumea, capital of the French colony of New Caledonia, originally served as a French penal colony. It was headquarters for American military forces in the South Pacific.

⁸¹ Edward C. Foley (1917–2005) was an Army lieutenant stationed in the South Pacific. He was 12 years younger than his chaplain brother.

However, Ed is uppermost in my mind and I must see him as quickly as possible.

At the Army Headquarters they tell me that Ed left for Guadalcanal six weeks ago. I am disappointed to hear it but do not give up hope of seeing him shortly at “Cactus,” the code name for red-hot Guadalcanal.

I forget to mention that the priests at the Cathedral informed me that there are Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny here who run a school. I decide to present them with some calling cards tomorrow.⁸²

I wander around the old town to verify for myself somebody’s observation that when France fell this little place was hard hit. She was. The stores are bare for the most part. What is on their shelves will not be there long unless Uncle Sam replenishes their stock of things like soap, etc. What of the people? They are French, their white faces standing out in the polyglot collection of people that make up the population. Now I see for myself for the first time in the flesh the men and women in the National Geographic for July. There are Chinese, Javanese and the natives, the Melanesians. The Javanese women, beautiful and petite, are dressed in multi-colored blouses and long skirts. Round their waists are swathed the sarongs. Now a mother comes along with her sarong slung across her right shoulder for her youngster, riding cheerfully in his chair that the sarong makes on his mother’s right hip. The youngsters look too large a burden for such delicate, slender mothers.

Over a little brown stucco house I read “Blancherie.” It is the Chinese laundry, doing a rushing business for les Americanes. All over the town the Chinese families are doing laundry.

Suddenly I hear a shrill squeak of a 1920 horn of rubber, operated by hand. One of the priests of the

Cathedral is blowing for my attention. I hop into his ancient Renault and he takes me to the Sisters who run the Ecole Libre. There Sister Joseph, who speaks English, is most charming. She tells me that she would be delighted to have some fruit and sugar for her poor. I promise to have some brought back tomorrow. School is out for the summer, she informs me. Summer here is winter. Back home the folks are slipping along on icy sidewalks, boys are playing hockey, girls are trying to make figure eights and the first-timers are assuming horizontal positions. Here coconuts are ripening overhead on tall trees about as high as telegraph poles back home, with fronds only at the top of them. Flamboyant trees, spreading foliage about 20 feet high, are in full bloom with their gorgeous red blossoms. How my mother would love to have one of them on the lawn. The Sister takes me through the school where the desks are now empty. On the walls are the maps, all in French. Sister is amazed when she learns that we were in Africa recently. I leave her and promise to surprise her in the morning.

Back through the town to the temporary dock. The native men are dressed in shorts, blue and multi-colored shirts, red for the most part. Their hair is thick and jet black, except for the top, where they have dyed it with peroxide! Queer combination, reddish yellow and black. These are the men only.

I decide that I will surprise the Sisters this afternoon. So back to the ship immediately. Chief Bonnette, Chief Commissary Steward, gives me three 100 pound bags of sugar, the same of rice, and three big boxes of apples and of oranges. Back to the town where the Marines again give me a lift to the Convent. The eyes of Sister Joseph almost popped out when she saw the load of food. The men carried it in. The Sister rang the house bell and all the Sisters then and there ate an apple. They hadn’t had one for two years. No importation from New Zealand for that length of time. Their eyes sparkled with evident pleasure at the goodness of Providence, to which

⁸² The Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny are a worldwide missionary order founded in France in the early 19th Century and focused on charitable work and education.

they attributed their windfall. Sister Joseph wanted to know if I had stolen them, to which I said: “Yes, of course, Sister, every Chaplain is an honest thief.”

“Maman,” the Superior, was as overjoyed as the rest of them with the foodstuffs and she insisted that I take some of the handiwork of the nuns to my Maman, some delicately embroidered table cloths and doilies. I was delighted with them and shipped them home immediately upon my arrival back on the ship. I wonder when she will get them.

In the center of the town of Noumea is the Place des Cocotiers, a long rectangular shaped park. The lower portion of the park comprises a small botanical garden surrounding the statue of Governor [Jean-Baptiste] d’Olry, famed for his pacification of the natives after the 1878 revolt. Place des Cocotiers is a misnomer because the only coconut trees are a few planted around the edges. Most of the trees are the wide spreading flamboyants. The winter, their flowering season, has transformed the whole place into one blazing mass of color with their broad crimson flowers.

Two American soldiers pass by, one asking the other, “What does ‘merci beaucoup’ mean?” Other laughingly replies, “Thanks a million.”

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 20, 1943

Back to the Convent again in the morning; this time with another box of apples and one of oranges. Again the house bell rings and the eighteen nuns flock around me for an orange personally distributed. What surprises them is that they are still cold. They had just come out of the refrigerator on the ship and moisture was still condensing on them. This time Sister Joseph gives me an alb that I sorely needed for my altar equipment.

I forgot to mention that on each of my visits, Sister Joseph brought out the very best bottle of

French wine and insisted that I take two glasses; the homemade cookies that accompanied them were delicious.

In the afternoon I leave them to wander around the town. To the Cathedral for Stations of the Cross for my father. There I meet Chief Callahan of the USS John Penn, who ran the Rosary for his men on his ship while we were on the way down south on our cruise. They did miss the priest, he said, and he felt that something should be done to signalize Sunday from the other days of the week. We have a pleasant reunion. Also meet Fr. [Ozias B.] Cook, Chaplain on the Saratoga. His parish is a large one; 3200 men aboard her. She is lying off us, still a magnificent fighting ship, although the Japs have reported that they sank her.⁸³

At the corner of the Rue de la Somme and Auvergne is a garage where a couple of men are repairing a car. Standing against the wall are two bicycles. On my inquiring about the chance of hiring one of them for the afternoon, I obtain the permission, providing that I sign a promise to meet all expenses for “destruction,” spoken in melodious French. Off I wheel on my latest 1925 model. Suddenly three pedestrians loom up on my port bow. I yell at them to watch where they are going. When Commander McRae, Communications Officer, Lt. Oliver, one of our doctors, and Ensign Eccleston saw me they shouted, “Where did you dig that out?”

I bike here, there and everywhere all over the town. Somebody identified a brown stone group of buildings as a leper colony so I investigate. It turns out that it was the town prison. Right next to it, sailors and Construction Battalion men are putting up Quonset huts. One of them informs me that here will be the location of the COMSOPAC, Commander of the South Pacific Headquarters.

⁸³ One of three American aircraft carriers in the Pacific Theater, the *Saratoga* was twice torpedoed by the Japanese but never sunk. The fog of war knows no boundaries, and as Foley notes, the Japanese did report that they had sunk her in the Battle of the Coral Sea in May 1942, but they had in fact sunk a sister ship the *Lexington*. The *Saratoga* served out the war and was finally sunk in an atomic bomb test in July 1946. She presently serves as a recreational diving site off Bikini Atoll.

Down a twisty, little street to a corner where a small house is being built. The cement is being shovelled into empty gasoline cans and is carried shoulder high by hod carriers, Melanesians in shorts, as usual. Two of my CB's come along, laugh at my bike and stand to watch the operation. One of them tells me that he once read the biography of one of the gas cans. It had travelled all over the world serving every conceivable purpose and some purposes that were beyond the fondest imaginings of the manufacturers. As he put it himself, "I have seen them used for everything from kitchen utensils to baby carriages."

I climb up a little side street with its picturesque one-story houses. One catches my eye particularly. It has two wooden cones at either end. In the middle is a door. Inside an elderly maman with snow white hair is reading with absorbing attention a letter, perhaps from the home country. By her is a little table with her basket of handiwork and at her feet is the dog sound asleep. The house is painted a warm brown and looks like what it is, a home with a mother presiding over it.

The next street brings me to a hospital where some of our Guadalcanal veterans are recovering from their wounds and some of the non-wounded are enjoying their leaves. They stay on the island for three months and then get about three weeks liberty before they go back to battle the Japs.

At the Convent where I dropped in before going back to the ship, I met one of the nuns who escaped from the Japs in the Solomons. She, 28, and a companion 65 years-old fled 35 miles over the mountain passageways before they made contact with the Americans. The Japs killed two Sisters and two priests, one a Frenchman, the other Fr. Duhamel, because they refused to give information to their captors.⁸⁴

Back to the beach where I see on the street approaching it the massive equipment that we have carried

8000 miles for the 35th CB Battalion. Giant cement mixers, cranes, tractors, bulldozers, scrapers, rooters, all of which will be put to work shortly building airports, warehouses, etc. This place is now an advanced base, the nearest jumping off place for the Solomons, about 800 miles from Australia and 1150 from the Solomons.

On the little fishing boats in the harbor, as we make our way back to the ship, only five minutes from shore, we see what is now familiar, the Cross of Lorraine and the Free French Flag of De Gaulle. The Cross of Lorraine is a double one, blue on a white field. The Free French Flag has a blue, white and red pattern, same as the regular French flag, but for its arrangement, which consists of three simple perpendicular blue, white and red squares. This flag starts with blue, has a white diamond and a red ending.

Upon my return to the ship this afternoon I meet the Chaplain of the USS Montpelier, Mr. Leonard Dodson [a minister in the Church of the Nazarene], originally from Plymouth. He invites me to conduct services aboard his ship. I leave with him, hear confessions from 7:20 P.M. to 9:20 P.M., then cross the gangplank to the USS Chicago, another cruiser tied up to the Montpelier. I finish hearing confessions at 10:40 P.M. and start back for the Clymer.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 21, 1943

Up at 0430. Start at 0500 for the USS Montpelier where I am to say Mass at 0600. Fr. MacDonald, still aboard, will say Mass for my men. Aboard the Montpelier I praise the men for their splendid turnout for Mass and Communion. Learn at breakfast from the senior aviation officer the circumstances of the death of Ensign Thompson, the pilot killed in the plane crash. Plane didn't get sufficient impetus from the catapult. When the two depth charges exploded, he was killed instantly. Radioman was not open in the cockpit as he was, but enclosed in

⁸⁴ Japanese treatment of Catholic clergy in the Solomon Islands was particularly brutal. Arthur Duhamel, a Marist priest from Massachusetts, was executed at a mission station on Guadalcanal on September 3, 1942 along with a Dutch priest—to give Foley his due, the man's name could be read as French—and two European nuns. They'd been accused of communicating with the Allies.

pliofilm.⁸⁵ When he recovered consciousness, he was upside down in the water in the plane. Smashed fist through the pliofilm, freed himself from the seat to which he was strapped, recovered the body of the pilot, clung to a piece of debris until boat from his ship rescued him.

Men from the USS Chicago also at Mass. Their ship has been through three major battles: Midway, Coral Sea and Guadalcanal. Has suffered only one hit in which four men were killed.⁸⁶

1000—Back to the Clymer, then ashore where I meet, above all people, Fr. Dan Meehan, whom I last saw at Camp Allen in Norfolk last June. He is with the 19th Construction Battalion. Out to his camp four miles from Noumea in his jeep. Dinner with his officers, a most hospitable group. Shows me his quarters; tent with concrete floor. Cot has mosquito netting to protect him from nature's dive bombers who do their work under cover of darkness.

Met Fr. Molloy, Army Chaplain in town where his unit is quartered in one of the parks. Am highly amused at the sign the Massachusetts boys have placed outside a head, "Boylston and Tremont Sts." Fortunately our boys have their sense of humor even 10,000 miles away from home. A barbershop owns the unique name of Scuttlebutt Center, Scuttlebutt being the Navy name for idle rumor. "Scuttlebutt says" is something we are hearing all the time when we are underway and know not our destination. Walking back to our miniature dock where our boats are ferrying the cargo to be trucked away by the CB's, I almost bump into a black native Melanesian who is wearing a triangular fern on his head. He is a magnificent physical specimen, is dressed in blue shorts and a dark blue shirt. I met him just as I left the shop of a saddle maker who made me a leather

strap for my watch right on the spot. Stepping into his shop you actually caught the smell of the cattle, the leather is so fresh.

Fr. MacDonald leaves me so once again I am a pastor without a curate. He was a tremendous help to me, both hearing confessions and interviewing men. They liked him exceptionally well, which augurs well for his 37th CB Battalion and their relations with him. He should make an excellent Chaplain for them in their camp six miles back of Noumea in the hills.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 22, 1943

We finish discharging our cargo and get underway, nose our way around the little hills bathing their feet in the sea, turn hard to starboard where we tie up alongside the tanker Gulfport for fueling. We lie to all night.

Mr. McRae, Communications Officer, informs me that I may have a chance to see Ed at Guadalcanal, for that is where we are eventually going. First we head for Viti Levu, one of the Fiji Islands, then back north to Guadalcanal. However, we may stay there only during the daylight for submarines make life miserable at night for ships there.

We take aboard hundreds of sacks of mail for Suva, the port of Viti Levu and for Guadalcanal. Their Christmas mail is just catching up with the boys.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 23, 1943

Underway again, for Suva 850 miles away.⁸⁷ We go out unescorted; will make run for it alone since we are a fairly fast ship, 18 knots, and these waters are not too dangerous; safer, surprising to say, than outside Norfolk or Boston Harbor.

Men are cleaning up the ship after the unloading. The dry cement powder left the boats, holds and the

⁸⁵ A transparent, plastic membrane used for waterproofing.

⁸⁶ The *Chicago*, a heavy cruiser, was torpedoed and sunk by Japanese aircraft eight days later, on January 30, 1943, in the Battle of Rennell Island, part of the Guadalcanal Campaign. More than 1,000 personnel were rescued. Sixty-nine were killed. Foley refers to the ship's fate later in the diary.

⁸⁷ A harbor city on Viti Levu, the largest of the Fiji Islands.

decks in a sorry condition, but our men turn to it with a will and scour and scrub all day.

Evening sunset in the South Seas. Sky is liquid gold as the sun gives us her parting benediction of the day. Clouds are on fire with her glory. Nature is lavish with her masterpieces down here. Last night we saw a tropical moonrise. Again a full moon. We have seen the moon full at sea for the last four months; the October Harvest Moon on the way to Africa, the November Hunter's Moon on the return trip, the December on our cruise down here, just outside of the Panama Canal, Pacific side, and now moonrise over the Dumbear Mountains, our anchorage last night. Through a cleft in the mountains she slowly raises her head in full blown beauty.

Off to our portside red lights top the masts of 20 odd ships that are riding at anchor, men o' war, combat transports like our own and ferry transports, tankers and minesweepers. On the top of one of the mountains a searchlight is chattering away unceasingly to one of the ships on the other side of us. The night is filled with silence. The moon is riding in and out through the clouds. Mr. Townsend by my side remarks that the mountains are as beautiful in the half shadow as in the full moon. We stand on the bridge deck aft, drinking in the quiet beauty of it all. Suddenly at 8:30 P.M. General Quarters and we rush to our battle stations. Alarm over in half an hour.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 24, 1943

Up at 0410. Is that early! Once again we are at sea taking all possible protection against anything that might be bent on our destruction. While in port we enjoy a sound night's sleep without making any provisions for going over the side at night. Now that we are underway again we are back in our old routine. "That thought" is always in the back of the mind, "It may happen at any time, so be prepared."

0510—I have my first Mass on the Upper Deck Aft when dawn has grown bright and the best hour for submarines has passed and the worst hour for us. A dozen men receive Holy Communion. My parish

is reduced to normal numbers, for we have disembarked all our passengers. Shortly we expect to take more aboard.

0900—Second Mass, which I offer for my family that God will continue to bless us all and bring us safely and shortly home again. By the way, as yet no mail from home. Not to be surprised at this, as I write to my mother, for our ship did a lot of travelling since last December 17, 1942, and mail will have a devil of a time catching up with us.

Today "Up Rugs." The deep cushiony grey rug on my deck goes the way of all rugs on our ship. She is taken up and stored away against a better day, for we must cut down the fire hazard. When we are hit (How optimistic!), there will be less to burn.

1000—General Service. Protestant boys are most attentive listeners to the sermon on the leper and the Centurion, the Gospel for the third Sunday after Epiphany. They get the same sermon today that the Catholic men got and they seem to like it.

We have aboard with us Captain Shull and Sgt. Snyder, Marines attached to the Quartermasters' Division; both splendid young fellows. Shull attends General Service and Snyder Catholic.

MONDAY, JANUARY 25, 1943

0445—General Quarters. We are old hands now at getting up an hour before dawn but we never get used to it. Mass as usual and then breakfast when the chimes sound at 0700.

Ship seems very quiet during this 850 mile run for we have no passengers on board. We will start picking them up when we reach port at Suva on Viti Levu. A week ago we ran south of it on the way to Noumea.

What about the weather these days! One beautiful day follows another. Only once in the past four weeks have we had a bad day. It is glorious summer weather; temperature a comfortable 80 degrees.

At Noumea I bought some of the latest magazines. January 20 was the day I purchased the October 17, 1942 issue of the English Sphere, an illustrated weekly of a type far superior to Life. This one carries excellent book reviews and articles on the current stage. One book review was [titled] a “Word in Your Ear,” an anthology [of word histories] by Ivor Brown.⁸⁸ The following struck me for its original turn of expression in the review. “At least it will never be able to be said of him that a weary reader might be found gathering wild adverbs on the north-west slopes of his Sunday article.” Never before came across such an original metaphor. The advertising section for hotels in the country is most decorous. In order to have an ad appear, you must write a letter to Ashley Courtenay.⁸⁹ Upon his endorsement your ad breaks into print. This one really captured my fancy. “CLEMATIS COTTAGE HOTEL, Washington, Nr. Worthing. A haven of content and character for a weekend or longer in the fold of the Sussex Downs. Noted for the discerning people who repeatedly stay here. Inclusive terms 4–4½ guns.” (guineas)

Two o’clock we begin to sight high mountains on both sides of us. We are entering the Bay, passing through Kandavu Passage.

Planes circling overhead on patrol reassure us on our lone wolf trip. Hear one rush by at deck level. Out to see it but has come and gone. Chief Bonnette sitting out on the deck, man in charge of crew’s mess, enjoying his rest smoking a cigar, shoes off. Say to him safer than we would be outside Norfolk. His reply, speaking English as quickly as he does his native French, “No, no, no, no, Father. Here’s where the Jap boys take inventory. No patrol ships around, they pick what they want.” The Chief has been 24 years in the Navy. His ship, the Utah, was put under in 11 minutes at Pearl Harbor on that fateful December 7, 13 months ago.

At 2:30 P.M. up to the flying bridge, sight wild mountains covered with dense, green growth; apparently uninhabited. Down this way as in New Caledonia, the world still wears the fresh look of the morning of creation.

I try out new hand range finder on Gun Group #8. It is like a woman’s hand mirror with an open circle in the center across which run two perpendicular hairs. On the face is a gadget like the dial on a circular radio front. It can be manipulated all around. Numbers 45, 60, 90, etc. are the wing spread of the plane, on the same face. Get the spread, twist the hairs and you have the exact distance of the planes. On the face also are the readings Zero, Focke, Wolf, Messerschmitt, Junkers, Savioa; all the enemy planes set according to their relative size.

3:30 P.M.—“Station all special sea details.” We are supposed to dock at 5 o’clock; looks as though we are a bit ahead of schedule.⁹⁰

4:00 P.M.—We steam through the end of the Kandavu Passage.⁹¹ Tremendous island mountains on both sides of us, clad in dense foliage. On starboard side is the Matuku Range, one peak after another. One sunburst in particular catches Suva in the distance. If it is half as beautiful as it appears to be, it will be well worth a stay at shore. Snow-white business houses, white stucco residential sections with red and green tiled roofs, all brilliantly alive in the afternoon sun and set against a deep green background make a fit subject for an artist’s brush.

4:10 P.M. — We take the English pilot aboard, a Naval Lt. dressed in tropical naval uniform, British, white sport shirt and white shorts, white long stockings, shoes to match. He just exudes coolness. We follow the tortuous path through the minefield, being saluted en route by two scout planes from the local

⁸⁸ Brown was a prolific anti-modernist British journalist and critic.

⁸⁹ Courtenay was a noted hotel reviewer whose name later appeared on a series of popular travel guides to haute Great Britain. Foley, who as a Jesuit had taken a degree in classics at Oxford, was something of an Anglophile.

⁹⁰ Special sea details are manned when a ship is entering or leaving port.

⁹¹ The passage runs through the Fiji Islands.

base, who scream at us at deck height and wave a greeting.

4:30 P.M. – We are closer and are struck by the lovely fresh beauty of the place. It is set directly on Suva Bay with the South Seas sunset playing upon it.⁹²

5:30 P.M. – We moor to the dock. Note that even here camouflage is in order to mislead any Jap raiders. Preparations are made to take on cargo and passengers immediately, with plans noised about that we are getting underway two days from now.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 26, 1943

I go ashore on this island of the Fijis “where winter never comes.” Note the lush tropical growth everywhere. Traffic cop in color is one for the candid camera fiend. He is dressed in a blue jacket with a red belt and white skirt, scalloped at the knees. His hair is a thick mop of black that is almost another head. The creek I immediately cross is the Numbukalou. The street to the right leads down to the main shopping center. On the right is the “All Nations Street.” I meander down that one. Here are the fish and fruit markets, shops run by enterprising Chinese, Indian barbers, shoemakers and the ubiquitous Bombay tailor. It is a polyglot collection. On the streets are the natives, Fijians, the women dressed in long dresses, reaching down to their ankles, in colors of red, green and black, yet nothing garish about them. Though they are black in complexion, they have no Negroid features.

The women are distinctly beautiful and the men are fine physical specimens, dressed in brown shorts and shirts. Both have the outsize head of hair. Mixed among them are the women from India, dark complexioned with the most delicate features. Two that come along must be the child brides I have read about in the tales of the missionaries. They cannot be a day over fourteen, yet are mothering little youngsters obviously their own. Suddenly two Fijian boys of ten dash in and out of the shoppers,

one trying to catch the other; white, black or brown, boys are the same the world over. Both incidentally are barefoot, like all the Fijians, while the Indian women are sandaled. The dress of the latter are long flowing gowns of beautiful colors, pink and white. Two sweep by that are really striking. They are dark, very dark complexion and are robed in snow white from their headpiece to their sandals.

I step into one of the shops staffed by Indians to purchase something for my mother and sisters. Hope they will like them when they receive them. It will probably be months but they will get them eventually, before New Year’s Day, 1944. Some tortoise shell souvenirs, a necklace and a pillow slip.

An Indian lady strolls by with an earring placed in her right nostril. This is quite common among them. Some of them also have earrings, even the men. A black priest walks by on the other side of the street. I make bold to chase after him, identify myself, and the tie that binds all priests together the wide world over breaks down all formality and he tells me about his mission in the hills. Fr. Julian Owanga is his name. I part from him to run into Brother Patrick, a Marist Brother teaching in the school they run here.

In another shop I buy a hand-painted scene with a piece of bark from the Baka tree used for canvas. The young Indian boy speaks fairly good English. He informs me that he is 15 years old and goes to school still, but this is summer here. I ask him what school. The answer is still vague. Finally he makes himself perfectly clear. These people, his teachers “teach for Jesus Christ.” He has summed up the entire life of a Catholic lay person, Sister, Brother and Priest perfectly.

To the Church, a beautiful Cathedral, with a lovely life-sized statue of the Sacred Heart, hands outstretched in welcome looking down from the main entrance. It is built of brown sandstone, is cruciform,

⁹² Suva, on the island of Viti Levu, was the capital of Fiji, itself a British colony.

with an altar to Our Lady on the Gospel side of the High Altar and another on the left which remains unidentified. Still in front of it is the Christmas crib with massive life-sized Wise Men and 11 other figures also. On the walls are the Stations of the Cross. Again I say them for my father. One strikes me particularly, “Our Lord Is Stripped of His Garments.” In it, one of the Roman soldiers is leaning against a post, legs crossed, utterly indifferent to the tragedy being enacted. To him Christ was just another Jew to be executed. “Part of the day’s routine in this forgotten hole of creation,” as he might have said.

Notice a nun in the first row. When she finishes her prayers, I introduce myself. We go over to the Mother who, unlike the first nun, is straight from Ireland; the first one is from England. She is outnumbered, for of the four, three are from the Emerald Isle. Then in comes Father [Robert] Foley, Marist like the Sisters, and we sit and talk for an hour. One of the Sisters gives me some seeds for my mother. Hope they get to her in good condition.

Walk along out of town up a long hilly street. One lawn is fringed with long palms of banana trees, with the stalks growing in a way that appears to me to be upside down. Right alongside of them are the marigold flowers at home in Fiji as well as in the garden back home. What of the weather? Tropical showers are the rule, not the exception. People don’t, however, wear raincoats or carry umbrellas because the clouds empty their cargo in four or five minutes, the sun comes out and everything is dried out in short order.

The tanker forward of us shoves off and anchors out in the stream to allow a British passenger liner to berth. She is evidently a luxury liner converted to a transport. Is she? Not at all. In her case appearances are amazingly deceitful. As she slowly steams by us,

we note on her promenade deck three huge six inch guns swung inboard parallel with the lines of the ship. She has the same on her other, the starboard side, and, in addition, two three inch forward and aft. She is a raider, powerfully equipped and could wreak havoc on a Jap or German ship that would take her for what she appears to be from a distance. No doubt there is the same chattering going on alongside of her as there was alongside of us when we docked. The natives shout out “Boula,” whatever that means. “Hello?” They will put on board her oil drums as they did aboard us. They roll them down the length of the dock, pushing them with their bare feet. They come alongside of the hatch where they are hoisted aboard.⁹³

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 27, 1943

We are supposed to be underway today, but remain at anchor all day. Word comes of intense enemy activity where we are going so we ride idly in Suva Bay about a mile off shore. Meanwhile the USS Buchanan steams in and drops her hook. She will be our escort on the trip north to Espiritu Santo and then Guadalcanal? We shall see. The Buchanan has done her damage out here. She has painted along her bridge shield one plane with five Jap flags alongside of it. The Radar Shack high up over the bridge has a destroyer with a Jap flag alongside of it. One of the torpedo tubes amidships indicated by her little cruiser and flag that one fish found its home in a Jap cruiser that she came upon sound asleep. Three torpedoes were fired into her and she went down in three minutes.

Today is feast of St. John Chrysostom. Sixteen years ago tonight I was delivering a Latin sermon, praising him in the refectory at Shadowbrook at the evening meal.⁹⁴ This evening I am aboard a fighting ship of the United States Navy, a combat transport anchored one mile off the biggest of the Fiji Islands in the South Seas. “Tempora mutantur et nos mu-

⁹³ Boula is a Fijian greeting meaning “life” and implying a wish for good health.

⁹⁴ Celebrated for his eloquence, John Chrysostom (c. 347 – 407) was an early church father and archbishop of Constantinople. Shadowbrook was a Jesuit novitiate in Lenox, Massachusetts, founded in 1922. A decline in the number of Jesuit aspirants forced its closure in 1970.

tamur in illis.” The Latin poet was right; times do change and we change with them.⁹⁵

We get underway at 0900 this morning with a load of soldiers bound for Espiritu Santo, an island north of New Caledonia, the stop before Guadalcanal. In code we are on our way to “Button” first, then to “Cactus.” There I hope to see Ed. We leave the tropical showers behind us. Forgot to mention that, when I went ashore at Suva, during two hours of the morning from about 10 to 12 o’clock there were five showers. The people ashore simply waited under the roofs extending out from the houses and stores to the curbstones and then went about their business, with the longest shower lasting about four minutes, the shortest two. There might be clear sky overhead, yet suddenly a downpour would break with the rain clouds miles away in the sky.

Our escort, the USS Buchanan, is ahead of us kicking up a tremendous wake as she cruises back and forth across our bow. We are doing 16 knots, about 10½ land miles, while the Buchanan is doing about 25 knots, in land miles about 29. Looking down from the flying bridge to the bridge I note that on the splinter shield protecting the bridge is written in chalk the following: “Course T 202; Course T 201; Convoy Speed 16; Present RPM 74 (Revolutions of [propellers] per minute); Zigzag Plan #38.” Heading out to sea we have a lovely summer day, for it is always summer here in Fiji.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 29, 1943

0430 – Up for General Quarters again.

We forge ahead making excellent speed on our own, like this is not part of a convoy. Soldiers are playing cards, sleeping on the decks, developing their suntans. As we go down a starboard ladder, strong odor of bacon. One soldier yells out to another, “Smell that rasher of bacon!” Other replies, “The kind that mother used to cook.” “Almost” was the rejoinder of

the first. These Army boys hate their canned rations. Confessions this evening for soldiers.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 30, 1943

0430 – Up at this unearthly hour again for General Quarters. Dawn comes early in this part of the world.

0515 – We pass through Selwyn Straits, with Pentecost Island on our starboard and Abrim on our port side. Passage is about two miles wide with mountains rising up sheer on both sides. Are heavily wooded; no signs of life except on starboard mountain. A modern house with red-tiled roof and white stucco front all by its lonesome down on the shore. Perhaps in it lives somebody who wanted to get way from it all. Not satisfied with the South Seas alone, he even picked himself a deserted island.

0815 – We suddenly answer an alarm for General Quarters. Sub reported in the channel. This is one of the places where, according to Chief Commissary Steward Bonnette, the “Jap subs take inventory.” After half an hour we are secured from General Quarters. One depth charge dropped overboard to keep Hirohito’s boys down.

We proceed slowly up the mined channel, using extreme care. As we pass between two marked buoys, we are told that here is where the USS President Coolidge, one of our biggest ferry transports, went down last month. She struck one of our own mines, swung around and hit another. An attempt was made to beach her. She headed for shore, came to rest on a ledge, later slid off and went to her death. Coolidge lost only four soldiers. She was within 100 yards of shore, but all equipment went down.⁹⁶

Air is filled with odor of what seems to be pine trees. Reminds me of Lexington Park [in Somerville, Massachusetts], where our parents used to take us when we were small. Man after man of us fills his lungs with the pungent sweet smell.

⁹⁵ Foley attributes the line to Ovid, as was believed at the time; but it is now said to be a 16th century German invention.

⁹⁶ The Navy records two deaths; 5,440 Army troops were on board the former luxury liner.

Make out large plantations on the shore, row upon row of tall, palm-crested trees about as high as a telegraph pole. Civilian standing near me, Mr. Beveridge, informs me that they are coconut trees. In the distance, tops of mountains on every side of us wearing lovely blue color that deepens into purple as they fall away to the horizon. Again we see the sandy shore of the channel, the greenest of green water and the whitest of white sand. Channel is lined with long stretches of sand that are never stepped on by human feet. What crowded beaches they would be at home! Off in the distance off our port bow is a mountain that has a cloud spiraling up. Has appearance of a volcano sending up lazy white steam. Plane suddenly roars by at deck height, dips its starboard wings in salute, so close to us that we can see the pilot and his radioman smiling as they wave.

We maneuver through the minefield, pass through the anti-sub nets, make a turn to port and suddenly find that we are in the presence of 32 other ships of all descriptions; cruisers, minesweepers, destroyer tender with three of her children tied to her apron; British cruiser Achilles that helped us put Graf Spee under off east coast of South America.⁹⁷ There are cargo ships and ferry transports and fighting transports like our own. On either side of the channel that runs between the two islands slowly rises a line of mountains, either densely clothed with tropical growth or neatly laid out in square patterns of coconut trees. Suddenly down the sloping side of the mountain off our starboard, a seaplane is coasting as she comes down to make a landing on the water, then a little lower, and the first spray flies from under the gentle touch of her under carriage. Pontoons, another white plume, another, another, until she has landed; another scouter back home safely.

This island right here is bombed regularly, about every two or three nights by Joe Lone Wolf, but he

does little damage, being able to see nothing in the black darkness. His objective is the airport just over the brow of the mountains. Meanwhile we see scores of seaplanes riding at anchor. They are spaced about 100 yards apart and line the starboard bank. Training the glasses of the sky lookout in Gun Group #2, I espy a nest of six small bomber seaplanes hiding in a coconut grove. A mile downstream there is another group; this time about ten of them. Meanwhile there are a number of them up in the air, patrolling their regular stations, high in the skies.

Peace and war are sharply contrasted by the sight of cows grazing unconcernedly in between the wings of the planes parked in the groves.

There is no sign of habitation except an occasional little house of white with a red-tiled roof. In the distance we can make out a cluster of about six of them, with a lovely little church painted white with red piping. Nearby are two long buildings with Red Crosses on them, indication of Hospital. The Church is Catholic and has a statue directly in front of it.

Shortly after passing the island, we drop anchor just before the channel as this end opens out to the sea again. Alongside, the cruiser Minneapolis shows her scars after a recent brush with the enemy. Her bow is patched up. Sun is boiling hot. A ten minute session with it is a big dose, as some found out to their sorrow when big blisters formed on their backs. We lay to the rest of the day. I read some of the Office, then submit the schedule of services for tomorrow to the Executive Officer.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 31, 1943
Espiritu Santo.

0500—Deep throated roar of seaplanes taking off on dawn patrol wakes me up. One after another they soar off to the horizon on their scouting mission.

⁹⁷ The Admiral Graf Spee, a German battleship, was deployed to the South Atlantic to attack merchant ships believed to be carrying material from South America to Great Britain. In December 1939, following a celebrated naval battle with British forces in which she was severely damaged, she was scuttled by her captain off the coast of Uruguay.

0600—Reveille. First Mass 15 minutes later with practically all of the thirty men going to Holy Communion. The soldiers are grateful for the opportunity for they have no Catholic Chaplain.

0900—Another Mass at which attendance is excellent.

1000—Chaplain Goodhand, Chaplain with the troops, conducts church service on the boat deck forward for non-Catholics. Weather frightfully warm, sun beating down upon us in full force.

I ask the Executive Officer for permission for the men to have a swimming party. Off we go at one o'clock up the channel about a mile, where a river flows into it. We, 100 of us in three boats, go up about 200 yards till we hit a pontoon bridge erected by the CB's; there we disembarked, hopping out of the way of Army and Marine trucks rumbling over the bridge. A quick rush up an embankment to a grove and through it for a couple of minutes and off a 10 foot diving platform into the cooling fresh water of this swift river, about 100 yards wide. Somebody has rigged a long rope to the limb of a tree, put a stick about a foot long through the end of it. We stand on the top of the platform, about 25 feet high, especially built for this game. Grab the rope as it swings back from the man ahead of you and then out and up, sailing with the greatest of ease until you let go and then drop about 30 feet. That swing is kept busy all afternoon. Down about 25 yards is one that is really a breath-taker. You climb a tree to grab that rope, swing out over the bank which is about 20 feet over the water, then at the end of the long arc, let go and drop 50 feet. It is too much for some of our boys; they swing way out and hold on until they swing

back again. I, too, am content with the one of moderate height.

I have my first sight of the natives; half a dozen men or boys. It is hard to tell their ages for they are all coal black and wear only loin cloths. They are sitting in a group watching the American sailors enjoy themselves. There are men from other ships as well as ours. One boy sailor, as he steps out for his swing over the water just ahead of me, sings out, "This is the life, January 30, swimming in the old river. We didn't do this in New York."

The water is a light blue color, lined with thick tropical vegetation right down to the edge. We are swimming in a clearance made for a coconut grove. Overhead are the big trees loaded with their fruit, growing in clusters of nine or so with about three clusters to a tree. Right alongside a little bush on which I hang my clothes is an old monarch of the forest whose trunk goes into a fancy dance just before it disappears into the ground. Instead of being round like the other trees, this one spreads out into five legs, as it were, about three feet high and very slender.

We swim about three hours, from one to four, and then head back for the ship. Before leaving I pick up a coconut, endeavor to open it, but fail. Its shell is hard.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 1943

0615—Mass on Boat Deck Aft.

1630—We are underway for the most talked of place in the South Pacific, Guadalcanal, and with us are three other attack transports and four destroyers for protection.⁹⁸ We make our way, oh so cautiously, through the minefield and the nets and once more

⁹⁸ Guadalcanal, the largest island in the Solomon's and 1300 miles northeast of Brisbane, Australia, was taken by the Japanese in July 1942 with the aim of siting an airfield that would allow them to strike New Guinea, Australia, and eventually the American West Coast. The Battle of Guadalcanal, the first American offensive thrust in the Pacific, began with a Marine landing in August in which the Americans took the nearly completed Japanese airfield and named it Henderson Field. In the six months of battle on land and sea that followed, 24,000 Japanese and 1,600 Americans lost their lives in combat while thousands more died of tropical diseases. Several of the battles within the Guadalcanal campaign—such as the Naval engagements at Cape Esperance and Santa Cruz and the Marine Battle of Edson's Ridge—soon entered military lore, and the Battle of Guadalcanal has itself been the subject of scores of books and movies, the first of which, journalist Richard Tregaskis's *Guadalcanal Diary* (see Foley's February 3 entry), was published on January 1, 1943. The last Japanese troops withdrew from the island on February 7, 1943.

we are on our own. Four cruisers steam by our starboard side, heading for the place we just left. One sailor remarks, “Chaplain, they are going the wrong way. We need those fellows.” Overhead planes are flying about ceaselessly searching the waters below for Jap subs. Our zigzag plan is #38 with turns that are the sharpest that we have ever made. They are almost complete right angles.⁹⁹

Underway about an hour when five destroyers, a cruiser and an aircraft carrier loom up on the horizon forward of us, again going in the opposite direction. The carrier is the *Saratoga* which was reported sunk only three days ago.¹⁰⁰ She is still a good fighting ship, without any scars of the battle in which she took part. We are steaming directly for a big mountainous island straight ahead. Over it and the other mountains that line our sides are lazy white clouds; some big white blankets, others just powder puffs. One sailor remarks that he slept topside on one of them last night and forgot to take his blanket in.

Uneventfully, the day grows old until 11 o'clock when we have a sub alarm. “Tweet, tweet, tweet, tweet, tweet” goes off over the public address system and every man on the ship springs to his battle station. We are keyed up for half an hour when we are “secured” as the Navy calls “Dismissed”! I ask my room boy, Godwin, how he would like meeting the Japs. He answered, “I wouldn't mind if we had some more battlewagons with us.”

In the evening a discussion with two Army Lieutenants on matters religious and otherwise. One has a sophomoric mind, was a Catholic, lost his faith at Union College, New York. We are both frank with each other; the discussion runs for two hours. Four others join in. An ex-Catholic is firmly convinced that people who practice religion are one of three types;

they are either in an intellectual coma, are ignorant or are hypocrites. I am in the first class!! He has no beliefs. He will die like a dog, i.e., no immortality of the soul; blind extinction at death. No belief in God or in Christ. “Schopenhauer,” he says, “was right. The only thing for a man to do is to put a bullet through his head.” Although only twenty-three years old, he is a confirmed atheist and a cynic.

First letter from my mother arrived today, along with Christmas cards. About twenty pieces of correspondence; mother's letter was dated December 31, 1942. Books from “Book of the Month Club” also arrived. The first has a cover that contrasts sharply with our present weather. It shows a cottage in the Maine woods buried in snow. Here we are on our way to Guadalcanal with the warm South Seas sun beating down on us, the temperature being about 90. In the “Book of the Month Club News” there is notice of a book, “Light on the Jesuits in China,” telling of our attempts to form a link between the East and West. The last sentence of the review reads, “The Chinese and the Jesuits both have a reputation for mysterious and devious ways; if you would like to know how justified that theory is, you may well start your investigation here.”

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 1943

0455—General Quarters. Out on the deck in the dark as usual, setting up my altar at the “Church of the Anti-aircraft Battery.” I wonder how Lt. Welch, who coined that title, is. I hope he is still of one piece fighting now in Tunisia against the Germans.

Cerise sky at sunrise, never seen before by men aboard. Cerise at sunset, yes, but not the first coloring at dawn.

⁹⁹ These defensive maneuvers were a commonplace in Foley's life at sea, and while the command of them lay outside the responsibilities of chaplains, he had studied these procedures as he did many aspects of Navy life. Naval regulations prescribed zig-zagging as the principal defensive measure to be undertaken by surface vessels in waters known to harbor enemy submarines. “The primary purpose,” notes *Naval War Instructions* (1944) “is to reduce the accuracy of torpedo fire, rather than to evade the submarine, since evasion is not feasible.” While promulgating guidelines as to speed, turning periodicity and turning angles to be employed under various conditions, *Instructions* left final determination of such matters to the judgement of a ship's senior officer.

¹⁰⁰ See note 83.

Learn when rigging the altar that we have reversed our direction. We are beating a hasty retreat right back to where we came from, Espiritu Santo. Japanese task force was headed in our direction; 35 ships reported ahead of us! We are going all out; ship just quivering under the forced draft. We would have been in Guadalcanal in two hours at eight o'clock. Now the boys there and brother, Ed will have to wait for the sorely needed replacements that we are carrying. Word came through last night at 8 o'clock that a task force was headed in our direction. All other forces headed for Guadalcanal like ours were told to reverse direction. We received no word. For six anxious hours, since no word came, we continued to head right into the mouth of the big guns of the Jap ships. Then at one o'clock this morning word finally came through to us to turn back. Meanwhile two of the destroyers leave us and go straight ahead to join battle with the Japs in union with our other big ships that are with them on their way to engage the Japs. So Communications Officer McRae informs me. He said that he was sick with anxiety last night waiting for the big message to come through on the radio. Air traffic was extremely heavy. Yet in the coding room message after message was broken for hours until the one came through.

Army Officer informs me that when he came on deck and noticed that we were steaming south again, since the sun was on our port instead of our starboard side, he inquired of one of our Officers if we were going in the right direction. The answer was, "It's the right direction for us in view of what is ahead."

After breakfast I thumb through the latest "Book of the Month Club News." It tells us that one of the books for next month is "Guadalcanal Diary". In the review I read that boys ask questions like the following: "Why was this spot chosen to send our men to, so remote that the supply line seems impossibly long?" "Why don't reinforcements come?" "Why does it seem easier for the Japs to get new forces than for us?"

We on our ship know why we couldn't get in there this morning, as we were scheduled. May God be

with Ed and the rest of the boys during their hours of isolation and apparent neglect. May their sore trial be a short one. All morning we continue to rip along, kicking up a tremendous fuss between us as we endeavor to put mileage between us and the Japs.

About two o'clock a plane, a dive bomber, is sighted on the horizon off our starboard beam. What is she? Has a carrier caught up with us through her flying eyes? Fortunately, it turns out to be one of our own from Espiritu Santo. Shortly a large PBY patrol bomber cruises leisurely by. Meanwhile the [dive] bomber goes up high behind a big white pillow of a cloud. He suddenly pierces through it, diving straight down in a power dive at an incredible speed of 400 miles per hour. Then climbs out of it perpendicular again, but this time straight up, he turns over on his back, describes a loop, is once more on an even keel and makes away to catch his breath. This boy certainly handles his plane magnificently. He is lost behind another cloud, rides through it, straightens out and is away, after giving us a first-hand demonstration of what a dive bomber does in actual operation. Now he knows, if he didn't know before, what his good ship will do, what strains she will stand, how obedient she will be when the hour of testing that means life or death comes.

One of the Army Officers remarks that he used to think that the Air Corps were the glamour boys of the fighting forces. He had his ideas changed radically one day at Fiji. He was at the airport when five four-motored long distance bombers came in. They had been on a long raid to the Solomons. The first plane that came in had 111 bullet holes through her. Her five crew members struggled out of their ship and collapsed in a pile, completely exhausted. For three hours off and on they and the other ships had fought off one fighter attack after the other.

The Morning Press from the Radio Shack carries the following paragraph radioed from Los Angeles. "Knox and Nimitz and Halsey were under Jap air attack twice within the past two weeks – first at Espiritu Santo, of short duration, second of 7 hours duration at Guadal-

canal.” “That’s us,” says one of the sailors. Just at this moment we are between both of [the islands].¹⁰¹

4:30 P.M.—Off on the horizon three squadrons of bombers are winging their way north, no doubt bent on giving aid to their brothers in arms on land and sea on and off Guadalcanal.

7:30 P.M.—We drop anchor in Second Channel, where we were when we first arrived last Saturday. We note on our way in that there is not a single fighting ship in these waters. Only last Monday when we were leaving there were at least twelve. Then on the way out, four sleek light cruisers were heading into port here; they didn’t remain long!

Over the radio comes the report: Big sea battle being waged off Guadalcanal. Losses suffered by both sides. All-out battle by Japs to retake “Cactus.” Again may Our Lady and her Son and St. Joseph be with Ed and his buddies in their hour of agony. Here we swing with the rapid current of the stream while they perhaps battle with the Jap reinforcements.¹⁰²

Yet here we must stay. If we ventured out, we would be liabilities to our own fighting ships; besides fighting the battle they would be endeavoring also to protect us. God grant that the battle be decided in our favor so that we may hurry to their assistance. Then the report of a possible enemy offensive was an accurate prediction that held us over for a day at Suva, Fiji. Had we not stayed over, we should have by this time been filed away in Davey Jones’ Locker.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 1943

0600—Reveille.

0615—Mass on Upper Deck Aft. At breakfast Radio Press carries news from Washington that American and Jap air and sea arms are locked in a major struggle for the control of the Solomons. That means that we stay here at least until the issue is decided. If the

outcome is in our favor, we should shortly move north again to Guadalcanal. If against us, then we will stay here until the balance is adjusted in our favor.

After breakfast, go topside to the flying bridge to read my Office. Skirting the shore on our starboard side about a mile away are ten one-story shacks of corrugated tin, white on the sides and red on the roof. Between the fifth and sixth is a little lean-to with Chinese writing over its entrance. Apparently it is a shrine. Out of one of the houses comes a Tonkinese woman with two gasoline tins straddled across her shoulders. She makes her way to the community well, dips down with the bucket three or four times, balances her burden and goes back into her house. From another shack a little Chinese tot, about three or four, toddles out, dressed in a black skirt and a multi-colored blouse. Behind the little one is the mother, dressed also in a black skirt but a white blouse. Both of them also make their way to the community well.

These houses are only about twenty feet from the river bank. Green lush grass grows right down to the water’s edge. In back of the houses are orderly coconut trees. Under them placidly chewing their cud are half a dozen cows, utterly indifferent to the ships anchored at their front door.

On deck below two of our soldier boys are scrapping. One is trying to dust the head of the other with a floor broom. Suddenly both of them are rolling on the deck, trying to secure headlocks on each other. The impromptu wrestling match in a twinkle gathers an audience soon split into two camps that cheer along the contenders. A referee steps in, umpires the match and hoists the arm of the winner after five minutes.

On the other side of the deck men are sleeping after breakfast. They sleep everywhere; in the stern of the personnel boats, under them, flat on the deck, on top of the fire hose locker, at the base of the 20 mm guns, on top

¹⁰¹ Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox had just paid a visit to Guadalcanal. Adm. Chester W. Nimitz, was commander of the Pacific Fleet. Adm. William F. Halsey was commander of the South Pacific Fleet and had led Naval forces at Guadalcanal.

¹⁰² The Battle of Rennell Island (January 29-30) was the last naval engagement of the Guadalcanal campaign.

of the ammunition boxes, every conceivable place, some of them positively defying the laws of gravity.

Alongside, moving slowly, maneuvers a native canoe made out of tree bark, which is still green. It should hold only two natives squeezed into the bow and stern, but she carries two more who are precariously balanced on a network of bamboo poles criss-crossed over her middle. The starboard extension is about four feet out over the water with a little pontoon to help keep the nervous craft on an even keel, and the port extension is out about a foot; on both sit the two extra passengers. In the canoe are bananas and coconuts. Presently they are engaged in bartering, dictating by pointing to a sailor's white undershirt that they want clothes in exchange for their fruit. Vigorous shakes of the head turn down the dollar bills sent down to them on the end of a rope. They are swarthy, black, magnificently proportioned and ominous-looking until they smile. Soldiers ashore told us that they are very friendly. Their barter goods are the chief products of the island of Espiritu Santo. They complete their business satisfactorily and paddle away, while we wonder why they don't tip over when it seems that a deep breath would dump them.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 1943

First Friday.

0430—Reveille

0500—Station all special details.

0615—Mass of the Sacred Heart.

Read in an old Time magazine that Admiral Halsey, the boss out here, throws everything, including the kitchen stove when he goes into action against the Japs. The officer who supplies him added that he then comes back for more lids. Halsey is now engaging the enemy where we came from. As yet no word beyond a noncommittal Washington Navy communiqué yesterday that a battle of major proportions is being fought. So yesterday's communiqué.

Today's — "An air of impending crisis hung over the Pacific where there were indications that a great and perhaps decisive American-Japanese sea battle might be developing in the Solomon Area." Another — "The Area is Guadalcanal." So the morning radio news. However, we get underway at 0530, so that means we must have the upper hand. Otherwise we would not be making another attempt to get through to Cactus, as Guadalcanal is known. We figured when we reversed course in a hurry two days ago that, if we were victorious in this sea battle, we would be on our way again shortly. If our forces were worsted, we would not return. We are underway! The vagueness of the report must be to mislead the enemy.

Just before dinner at noon up to the flying bridge for a little sun where I meet Mr. Beveridge, our civilian passenger bound for Guadalcanal where he has spent the last five years of his life. Most interesting life. Was a member of the Ninth Scottish Division in the last war. Southern Highlanders, one of the units of the "Ladies from Hell," called that because of their fierce fighting qualities and their kilts. Quiet, soft-spoken man, of the type who has helped England to rule in the far off places of the world for these long years. Was a prisoner for a year during the last war in Germany; found the common man as sick of fighting as the common man of England and France and Scotland and the States. Has greatest respect for Sisters and Priests who have given their lives to converting and consequently civilizing the natives, some of whom are less than a 100 years away from cannibalism.

Three o'clock in the afternoon, heart skips a couple of beats as word is passed down from the bridge over the broadcasting system, through 50 odd outlets of the ship, "Stand by for enemy planes." On the way down to sick bay, my battle station, I can make out on the horizon about three miles away, a big plane off our starboard beam, headed straight for us. "Is this it?" I ask myself. Go on down another deck, adjusting my sturdy helmet and lifebelt. After two minutes, roar of motors passes over us, no noise of any kind, word is piped down: "Secure from General

Quarters.” Plane was a big Patrol Bomber, Seversky [Aircraft Company], returning from the north, the direction in which we are headed. She was homing for Espiritu Santo, New Hebrides. All breathe a sigh of relief as we turn back to the tasks that were interrupted by the alarm. Then five minutes later another alarm; same as before, same issue, another of our PBY’s. Back again to packing my zipper bag that I got three years ago Christmas from “All of Us” as the card was signed, which meant the whole family. And now look where we are! Why pack the bag? I am getting ready with some “Oh, Henry’s” and cigarettes, etc. for Ed whom I hope to see day after tomorrow at the end of our trip. I hear that we [will] get up at one o’clock that morning of our arrival.

Gore, Mess Attendant, leaves \$15.00 with me for safekeeping. I ask him, “How do you like going to Guadalcanal?” Reply, “Can’t say that I do. But anything to help the boys there.”

One of the men comes in for a talk, is despondent because in the letter from home, wife told him that the baby had a bad case of whooping cough, is worried about the youngster. Moral: don’t tell boys news like that, of minor importance, about which they can do nothing but worry. Tell them about the dinner on Sunday, who was there, what his friends are doing, what the latest story is from the corner where he used to stop for the bus for work in the morning. Anything but the bad news.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 1943

0500–General Quarters.

0600–Mass on the port side of the boat deck forward with about 50 men attending. Site changed from the usual location, Upper Deck Aft, due to preparations for unloading at Guadalcanal. Set altar up around the corner due to the wind coming in over the starboard side; is a quiet spot. Over on the horizon sun streaking the eastern sky with fingers of gold. Only sound is crisp fizzing of the waves as

they roll over into a white wake. Occasionally on the bridge right over us, the port wing of it, Quartermaster sings out his bearings; 220 on the American Legion, 220¼ on the American Legion, another ship in our task force.¹⁰³ Sun rises during Mass. After Mass one of the men says that he will never forget the beauty of the setting. Sun rising to pay tribute of adoration to Our Lord also.

After breakfast men turn to have everything shipshape for unloading. Standing by the after hatch #4 watching soldiers having boat drill, one of them trips over cable, goes headlong. Roar of laughter greets his plight; rises with a smile as one of his buddies sings out, “What’s the matter? Got a case of the Solomon shakes?”

Before seeing the Captain about permission to see Ed ashore tomorrow, I whisper a prayer to Our Lady that request will be granted. That after Executive Officer first seen said the chances were very slight. Captain most graciously granted permission. At the same time, doesn’t want me left behind if we have an attack from land, surface vessels, subs or planes. Thank you, Our Lady. It is to you and your Son that I owe this favor.

At table one of the Army Officers is Walter Cox of Clemson, member of team, guard on eleven that beat B.C. at the Cotton Bowl three years back. Splendid young man with highest of respect for our men against whom he played.¹⁰⁴

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 1943

0300–Mass in the Library.

0330–Distribution of Holy Communion to soldiers in the Library.

0400–Boat teams are forming to put soldiers over the side.

0430–I go up on the bridge. Hear the Assistant

¹⁰³ Like the *Clymer*, the *American Legion* was a troop transport.

¹⁰⁴ Cox (1918–2006) would enjoy a long career as an administrator at Clemson, including a stint as interim president in 1985–86.

Navigator giving the bearings, “188 on highest peak on Guadalcanal.”

We are here at last. On our port side is the island which has been the cause of so many sea battles and whose soil has soaked up so much blood. Skyline is humpy, indicating mountains. Off in the east over the end of the line of mountains, sky is beginning to whiten a bit. Night is black as pitch, yet ship is wide awake, men are loosing all lines, grips ready to hoist 27 boats over the side as soon as we slow down. Decks are alive with activity as men go through tasks which are now second nature to them.

Up on the bridge is the air of expectancy always in evidence when we are striking a strange anchorage. Figures of the officers and men on watch are darkly outlined against the sky. Man brushes by, says familiarly, “Hello, Father.” Can’t identify the owner of the voice in the dark. Over against the backdrop of the dark mountainside red and green lights are moving forward rapidly, then two more and two more. It is the dawn patrol of planes taking off, beginning another day’s work.

Day is brightening quickly. Dawn breaks and the tips of the mountains and the green pastures on their sides are bathed in the fresh morning sunlight. Now Henderson Field is identified behind a row of coconut trees. A pillar of black smoke is rising, whose base is being licked by angry flames. Makes a somber contrast with the lush green of the mountainsides and the fleecy white strips of cloud that lace their tops. Is this a melancholy reminder of last, that is to say, this night’s raid on Henderson Field?

The other three ships with us turn off to starboard anchor and we are the last to set our boats in the water. In they go; order is given for boat teams to come topside for their nets at 6 o’clock. I climb down the net port side with my black bag loaded with Oh Henry’s, apples and Chesterfields for Ed.

We head for the beautiful shoreline, fringed with coconut trees. The boat runs up on the beach with its 35 troops and myself; out we hop and following

my custom, I bless the land as I set foot on it for the first time. Surf is rolling in gently, no angry waves at all, most unlike Africa where boats capsized with loss of life even before they hit the beach.

I identify myself to a Marine Officer when suddenly our conversation is drowned out by the roar of an Aircobra, a P-38 climbing from behind the row of coconut trees. Up she starts, then soars straight up, turns to port and is followed by three others, deadly looking planes with their double tails and long nose between two motors.

One of the soldiers standing by, asked as he stood gaping up at them in wonderment, “How do you like them?” answered, “I like them with that star on them.”

I start walking along the road to find Ed, who is somewhere in that coconut plantation. A jeep comes along; I bum a ride along a road constructed right through the heart of a coconut grove. Suddenly through a line of trees pockmarked by shell fire, I see the fire sending up the pillar of smoke; a plane that crashed. Now she is only a smoking ruin. On we bump by Henderson Field where hundreds of our planes are lined up, some at ease, others coming down the bomber strip, still more being serviced even at 6:30 in the morning.

We skirt the edge of the field when I see a sign “101st Medical Regiment” tacked onto the trunk of a coconut tree. “Thanks a lot for the ride,” and I am hotfooting it down the dirt road indicated by that arrow. I meet a soldier who is walking up, asked him if he knows Ed Foley, says that he just went down to the Chapel for Mass. Two tents down I see a priest vesting, walk up to identify myself. He is Fr. Ed Flaherty, brother of Fr. Tony Flaherty, Director of Charities in Somerville, Mass.

In a split second Ed is up and we both burst out in a long delayed “Hello!” right on the altar steps! We look at each other for a few seconds, all smiles, and then postpone our chatter till after Mass. To hear confessions I sit on a stone to the right of the Chapel which is only a canvas of a couple of Army

tents stretched from coconut trunks. I am sitting between two Chevrolet trucks that brought some of the men for Mass. The men have to speak up to be heard, for all the time the planes are taking off just 200 yards away and trucks are rolling back from the front just 2 miles away. "Front Line Specials" as the drivers have painted on them. A pet dog of the soldiers comes along to make friends, but I am cold to him. He doesn't realize I'm hearing confessions. The song of the parakeets flying from the palm head of one coconut tree to another adds another element that is missing when hearing confessions in the Churches back home. In the distance can be heard the rumble of gunfire where our artillery are hammering the Jap front lines. Quite a combination of noises!

Mass over, we chin together, Fr. Flaherty, Ed and myself. He looks wonderful, is tanned, hadn't lost any weight since the early days of the service. As usual, he is smiling all the time. Says that he hasn't been sick a day of the two months he has been here. He and Father exclaim "Oh, boy!" when I open the contents of the black bag. Nothing but canned rations in their Army menu.

Fr. Flaherty goes off to get ready for another Mass. Ed takes me down to see some sick Jap prisoners. About twenty of them who were starving when they were captured. One speaks a bit of English, is most friendly. All look woefully undernourished.¹⁰⁵ The ambulatory cases are wearing shoes like our old one-finger mittens. The big toe is alone. They are of black cloth composition. Most of them look at me with a quizzical expression, wondering what I am.

Meanwhile fighter after fighter plane is taking off right over our heads. Ed says that they have had twelve bombings during the last 14 nights. He tells me that they are so used to the roar that they sleep right through it at night. They have nicknames for the Japs coming over, such as Maytag Charlie; his engines aren't synchronized, don't hum together, it seems. And there is Pistol Pete who has a loud

staccato bark, and Millimeter Mike who talks like a 20 mm machine gun.

Ed finishes his breakfast and then Fr. Flaherty takes us for a ride in his jeep. We bounce along the roads made by the CB's straight through the coconut plantations where the natives work for 6 pence a day for Lever Brothers.¹⁰⁶ The main road is all right but when we strike off it, then the jeep sinks up to its hubs in black oozy mud, oceans of it. We swim around in it as well as the ten wheel Army trucks that nudge against us. We ride about five miles along and then turn back. Just as we turn there is a little cross indicating the last resting place of a Marine Corporal. RIP. Ed tells me that the Marines were pushed back 7 miles right to the edge of Henderson Field when no reinforcements came to help.

We drop off at Ed's regal apartment of a tent in the coconut grove. He has a mosquito netting up around his bunk in this tent which he shares with three other buddies. His and their personal conveniences here are absolutely zero. The boys have given up everything. A turn of a switch means civilization to them, Ed says.

Pair of us go walking down to Henderson Field; we hit through one jungle. On every side tremendous giant hardwood trees tower well over a 100 feet into the sky. They have boles about 6 to 8 feet in diameter flared out at the base by great buttressing roots. Among the trees and beneath them thrives a fantastic tangle of vines, creepers, ferns and brush. Up above some white exotic bird flies away. Insects are all over the ground; ants "whose bite feels like a live cigarette against the flesh," giant spiders and wasps 3 inches long, scorpions and centipedes. There are strange kinds of rats, too, said to be distant relatives of the possum; lizards from 3 inches to 3 feet and a few snakes.

The air is motionless and stifling. The hot humidity is beyond the imagination of anyone who hasn't been here. Rot lies underfoot everywhere and the

¹⁰⁵ Japanese soldiers were dying of hunger in the last weeks of the campaign and began to call Guadalcanal "Island of Death."

¹⁰⁶ A British soap manufacturer, Lever Brothers owned coconut plantations in the South Pacific.

ground is springy and mushy with decaying vegetation giving off a sour, unpleasant odor. We are constantly fighting off mosquitoes, bearers of malaria, dengue fever and other fevers. Ed tells me that in the Lunga River are giant crocodiles. This type of jungle is the type known as “rain forest” from the unbelievably torrential rains that come down. It is not surprising that a thick and heavy dampness is everywhere. What a terrain to have to fight through!

It is really the “green hell” of popular imagination. Coming out at the other side, we pass the powerhouse on which is written “Tojo’s Powerhouse, Now Under New Management.”¹⁰⁷ The boys haven’t lost their sense of humor. As we stroll through a long coconut grove, we are amazed at the lighting effect; sun is boiling hot, yet is filtered down through the palms in a sort of polaroid shade. Green sward below, whitish trunks about 100 feet high with green crests of palm leaves, gives the light green effect. Out onto Henderson Field where we see the planes in dirt revetments tossed up on three sides so that only one plane will be hit by bomb fragments.

I espy a Marine sitting under a sunshade that walked off Nantasket Beach. He says that the Japs left it behind right by his bomb shelter. In we go, Ed and I, and see the Jap handiwork, a very good dugout. Now occupied by John Kerr, son of Mrs. Mary Kerr, 344 Cherry Street, West Newton, and William Walters, son of Mrs. Bessie Walters, 326 E. Border Road, Medford. We have a picture snapped that should provide some smiles back home. [The photograph can be found on the cover.]

This is the bomber strip of the airport, which is a portable one with the steel mats laid down for a mile on end. High above are cruising four murderous looking P-38s, the Aircobras. Furnishing protection to my ship and her sisters lying along the shore.

Through a break in the trees she can be seen riding peaceably at anchor.

Back to the quarters, which are located between the bomber and fighter strips of Henderson Field. Because of their location, they do catch it on the bombing raids!

After dinner Ed and I start for my ship. He is taken with the lines of her as is everybody when she is seen for the first time. Up the landing nets, we climb onto the main deck and Ed is aboard. Up to the room where he gasps at the appointments. A good wash-up and some ice cream for him are just what the doctor ordered. The hour is two o’clock. We get permission from the Captain to have him stay aboard for the night; then we order two big steaks with all the fixings. Another box of ice cream and now he says he won’t have any more until after the steak. We wander around the ship on a tour of inspection. Then at 4:45 the Executive Officer sends word down that Ed is to leave the ship immediately. Disappointment but the reason is clear later. Jap task force is on the way; may be invasion force that is expected. Over the side goes Ed and we promise to see each other first thing in the morning. A long letter to our mother to let her know the good news about Ed. She will be tickled to hear that he is so well. We up the anchor hook in a hurry.¹⁰⁸

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 1943

We are still running for all we are worth away from the Jap task force which we learn comprises one carrier, two cruisers, and six destroyers, 150 miles astern. Aboard we have about 100 Marines, the first of the contingent. Half a dozen of them are down with malaria that the female mosquito pumped into them. One has two shrapnel wounds, souvenirs of the bombing the other night. Ed told me a funny story about Fr. Flaherty. He asked Ed if he minded breaking his stride on the way to the bomb shelter,

¹⁰⁷ Hideki Tojo was general of the Japanese Imperial Army and prime minister of Japan during much the war, and “Tojo” was American slang for the Japanese military. Convicted of war crimes, Tojo was hanged in 1948.

¹⁰⁸ On the previous evening, 20 battleships of the Japanese navy had evacuated the last of some 10,600 men from Guadalcanal, seeding the notion that the Japanese were about to try to retake the island.

a roughly dug tunnel, when the alarm went off during the night. They had 10 bombings in 14 nights. The first night after Fr.'s request, Ed jumped up at the alarm, grabbed three shoes as he told me, and started out on a hundred yard dash, wildly swinging the shoes, looked into Fr. Flaherty's tent, but neither hide nor hair of him did he see. Fr. Flaherty broke the world's record for getting up out of bed to the tunnel.

These Marines aboard are manning our anti-aircraft guns; have had six month's experience on Guadalcanal. Knocked down over 700 planes. One day they informed me that out of 23 torpedo planes that came in to attack the shipping on the beach, only one managed to get away. What they and all others dreaded more than anything else was the Japanese naval shelling. That was a killer for the morale. Just sit and hear the ghostly whining of the big shells coming, crouch and pray that they wouldn't kill you but be able to take no action in self-defense. Most of them are young boys about 21. A tough, hardened crew, happy to get away from it all for a while. As one of them put it, "I've seen enough dead men to last me for a long while." There is no glamour or romance or desire for battle action on their part.

4:00 P.M. — We turn back to Guadalcanal! Something must have happened to that Jap task force that was on the way. Destroyer that had been out in front of us about two miles also turns and steams by us as though we had both anchors thrown out. No more beautiful sight than to see one of the tin cans underway at full speed. Her prow is cutting the water like a knife, cleaving a line of unbroken white waves about five feet high while her stern is deep down, leaving a wake of boiling foam. With every line of her a thing of beauty, she leaps by to resume her station up forward to fend off the Jap subs.

What kind of a day is it? Same as usual; warm and summery, temperature about 85. Our sailors are taking advantage of it to deepen their tans. We left about 100 on the beach with their boats with whom we shall embark again tomorrow morning. These Marines have been on Guadalcanal since the first landing last August. Their stories are hair-raising. They

thought their last days had come. Bombed from the air, shelled from the sea and attacked from the land, they thought their last hours had come half a dozen times in September and October.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 1943

We drop anchor off Guadalcanal at 1230. I rush ashore immediately in a personnel boat to see Ed with a package for him that contains a radio, a box of Oh Henry's, one of Hershey bars, two dozen apples, a couple of apple pies, some air mail envelopes and paper. After landing on Kokum Beach about 7 miles south of where we were Sunday, I beg a jeep and travel through a coconut grove to the main road, down about five miles where I meet Ed and start right back with him for my ship. Fr. Flaherty starts to hunt up a jeep but we bum a ride before he shows up. Then when we come to a turn, he is right behind us. We hop in; join four others for the ride of our life. There was no road, just a mud ditch through this coconut grove. We slew from side to side, almost take off when we hit the deep gullies, all of us roaring with laughter at Fr. Flaherty, the driver, who Ed tells me is notorious for his chauffeuring.

We disembark safely on the beach where we talk for about fifteen minutes. Meanwhile, prisoners are boarding our PA boats, hospital cases are carried on stretchers and Marines are being added also. While we take in the scene and talk, big four-motored bombers are coming down about 200 yards overhead after their long raiding trip. P 38's are flying high up in pairs cruising around looking for any trouble that may materialize.

The setting is anything but warlike; the gentle breakers, spent, are fading away at our feet, the sun is beating down from above, the coconut trees twenty feet away make a vivid contrast with the white strand of the beach, which is the exact place where the Marines landed last August 7th. The black, black mud Fr. Flaherty's jeep kicked up is still with some of us; we wash it off. Recalls a remark of one of the Marines aboard, that this soil is so rich that if you stuck a match or a toothpick in the ground it would grow.

I tell Ed that we will be known as the Guadalcanal Local before long. Like all train schedules, ours too will have a footnote, "Subject to change without notice." After about half an hour I hop into one of our invasion boats to start back for the ship anchored about two miles off shore. Goodbyes all around while Ed breaks out into his best smile and says, "Oh, you'll be back again. The next time you'll take me with you for a change of scenery." I certainly hope so; meanwhile, "so long," and I'm away, as casual as that, although neither of us knows which one may go first.

On board the ship we now have about 1000 Marines and soldiers and 110 Jap prisoners of war. The soldiers and Marines are tired looking boys, obviously in need of a long rest, good food and clean sheets. Their officers are the same. One remarks at mealtime that this will be the first time that he has slept between sheets in six months and the second time that he has taken his clothes off.

Mr. Graves, the ship-fitter, meets his son, Donald, whom he has not seen for three years. Both of them fill up when they see each other. "Hello, son." "Hello, Dad." And they are in each other's arms.

The Jap prisoners for the most part are a ragged lot. About twenty of them are so weak that they have to be carried up the side of the ship on stretchers. They were cut off from their own men and were starving to death when they surrendered. They are the same men I met with Ed over at the 101st Field Hospital last Sunday when I saw him for the first time. As they came aboard one of the two officers with them lined them up on the quarterdeck in twos and they bowed in salute to the Executive Officer. Then they were escorted by Marines to a compartment below while the sick men are treated as tenderly as if they were our own. Yet they had been told that we would torture them. The Army guarantees good treatment to Japs who surrender by dropping down on them safe conduct slips. Some of them work. The

Marines, who report that some of their men were tortured, refused to take any prisoners.

What kind of fighters were these men? Long after the heat of battle subsided an American staff officer wrote: "The Japanese soldier fought as an individual, as well and as bravely as any warrior the world had ever seen. He bore privation and hardships that would have put out of action most of the troops of the Allied Forces."

We hear the boom of our artillery ten miles down the coast. One of our dive bombers is operating on enemy lines. Black puffs of smoke blossoming around him indicates that they are giving him a warm reception. But he manages to fly through unharmed, then lands on Henderson Field.

Savo Island, where we lost four cruisers one awful night in August 1942, is just off our port bow. Marines tell us that this water has been the graveyard of many ships, ours and Japs. They point out four Jap transports that were hit and beached just north of us on Cape Esperance. They were some of the victims of the November 12 to 15 battle when Halsey slugged it out with the Japs who were making an all-out effort to retake Guadalcanal. Halsey's sea and air forces sank one battleship, 3 heavy cruisers, 2 light cruisers, 5 destroyers and 12 transports. Our losses were 2 light cruisers and 6 destroyers. The 4 beached transports are now on the shore 7½ miles north of us at Tassafaronga.¹⁰⁹

As the sun goes down, we are on our way to Wellington, New Zealand, according to rumor.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 1943

Another beautiful summer day. Our passengers, soldiers and Marines, are interested only in catching up on their sleep and eating hot food. These Marines have been close companions of death for six months. They have seen their friends dying around them, yet what

¹⁰⁹ The Battle of Guadalcanal was in fact led by Rear Admiral Richmond Turner. The Japanese lost two battleships, one heavy cruiser, three destroyers and 11 transport ships. American losses were as Foley describes, with the exception of one additional battleship. The third of three major naval battles in the Guadalcanal campaign, it was the first that ended in a decisive victory for the United States.

do they ask for now? First Marine who came into the Library asked for an anthology of poetry. The next one with whom I was speaking wanted one thing when we got to our destination. “A long, long quart of milk.”

We are sliding down the slot of the Hebrides and the Loyalty Islands, with islands, isles and islets on both sides of us. In the afternoon one of the destroyers quickly changes her position and drops three depth charges as we pass through a very narrow passage-way about a mile and a half wide.

Some of the Army personnel have no extra clothing of any kind. They are outfitted with an emergency issue until we get to our destination. All of them are sick patients being evacuated for one reason or another, about 100 of them. Most of them, like the sick Marines, have had three or four bouts with malaria. Lt. Scott, sitting beside me at table, tells me that 91% of his battalion of 1000 men have had malaria at least once. Some of the men have had it four times.

The following note appeared in the “Plan for the Day.” “The following dispatch from Task Group Commander is quoted for the information of all hands: ‘IN SIX TRIPS ON THE CACTUS FERRY I CONSIDER THE PRESENT PERFORMANCE OUTSTANDING IN ALL RESPECTS WELL DONE.’”

“The above dispatch is reward enough for a job well done, but I would like to add my observation of all indicated an even better performance than usual and is greatly appreciated. It is hoped that at our next destination you may all have a real liberty which you all so richly deserve. A. T. Moen, Cptn., U.S.N.”

He didn’t redeem his hope!

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 1943
0450—General Quarters.

Among the prisoners is a Zero pilot.¹¹⁰ He tells the interpreters, two Marines, that Guadalcanal was nicknamed by them the “Island of Death.” Their losses were terrific. The Tokyo radio announced the withdrawal of its men from Guadalcanal and reports that 139 planes were destroyed from both the Buin and Guadalcanal areas. Anti-aircraft units of Marines aboard smile their incredulity. “Why we alone were credited with 769 shot down. Twice squadrons of 24 big bombers came over, once one got away, the next time not even one. We probably shot down about 700.”¹¹¹

The hit parade! “When it’s Mitsubishi Time on Tulagi,” “Stars Fell on Lunga River.”¹¹² Even with death raining down on them from the skies and pouring on them from below the horizon of the sea, the sense of humor of our boys did not desert them. One tells of how one night when he hopped into his foxhole this tremendous weight landed on him, a horse that stumbled and fell down on top of him. He never felt safer.

Prisoners aboard are small men about 5 feet in height and weighing about 100 pounds. With good food they are beginning to regain their normal weight. Marines tell us that Japs on Tulagi were magnificent physical specimens, a picked group, “The Imperial Marines.” They had to be killed to the last man.¹¹³

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 1943
0430—General Quarters.

¹¹⁰ The Mitsubishi Zero was a single-seater fighter aircraft known for its speed and maneuverability. It was superior to any fighter plane the U.S. possessed when the war began.

¹¹¹ The number of Japanese aircraft lost during the Battle of Guadalcanal is today estimated to fall between 680 and 880.

¹¹² “When It’s Sleepy Time Down South,” was made popular by Louis Armstrong in a 1942 recording, “When the Stars Fell On Alabama” was first recorded by the Guy Lombardo Orchestra in 1934.

¹¹³ Another instance of the fog of war. The Japanese had no “marine” force, imperial or otherwise. Its navy assumed responsibilities that the Marines took on in the American military. And while belief in a military force of six-foot tall Imperial Marines bred on an isolated northern Japanese island was commonplace among American forces in the South Pacific, there was no such group. A photograph of 27 Japanese officers who led the defense of Gavutu in the Battle of Tulagi and Gavutu–Tanambogo shows them to be of near average height for Japanese men during the war years: 5’3”. Virtually all of them died in the battle for the island. See entry for April 7, 1943.

0530–Mass

One of the Jap prisoners died this morning, a victim of beriberi and a bullet wound in his chest. Captain calls me to say he has decided that funeral will be at 0400 tomorrow morning.¹¹⁴

Saw the doctors taking care of the wounds of our prisoners today. Couldn't be more solicitous if they were our own men. Has made a deep impression on them. Quite contrary to what they expected. One Marine said that when taken prisoner a Jap pleaded with him to kill him with the first bullet.

Jap pilot is best physical specimen of prisoners. Unlike the others who were cut off in the jungle, he was forced down in the water. He pantomimed for me the whole operation. A steady hum was his flight, then a coughing noise to indicate the sputtering motor, a down swoop with his hands for the nose dive into the sea, then he was swimming. He was lucky to be picked up.

Jap prisoners were wise to surrender. Marines tell of how they trapped a battalion of 900 in a ravine. During the night they put up two rows of barbed wire around the Japs. Even then they wouldn't surrender. Those who climbed over the first line of wire were caught on the second by the crisscross of machine gun fire.

Weather changes sharply today. From December 8 to today, lowest temperature was 85. Highest 106 on Guadalcanal. Now as we are nearing New Zealand where their Fall is beginning, temperature drops to 70. Marines feel the drop, for they have been in the tropics for over a year.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 1943

0330–Called by the Quartermaster. After saying some prayers in my room, go to the stern of the ship, the fantail, where four figures are holding a

stretcher with the body of the Jap who died yesterday. I say some brief prayers over him, by pencil flashlight, asking God to count in his favor the circumstances of his death and burial, in strange surroundings, under foreign skies far from those near and dear to him. When I give the word, they lift the stretcher high. There is a grating noise and the body is consigned to the swirling waters. It is so dark that I recognize only one man and that by his voice, McGarry MM 1/c [Machinist's Mate 1st Class] from Kenmore Square. Along the eastern horizon there is not even a flicker of light yet. We make our way back gingerly to the ladder that leads to the next deck up. A simple ceremony but one that I shall never forget.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 1943

Steaming to Wellington, New Zealand. Marine Officers at table hear that "Battle of Midway" was filmed. "Would they like to see it?" "Not at all, not for three months at least." "We went through that." Presently are noise conscious. Were on Guadalcanal for 7 months from the first hour of landing. Most critical time was in early October. Could see Japs landing troops and supplies down the beach from them. Could do nothing about it. Nothing coming for them, except from the enemy naval shellings by night from below the horizon from unseen battlewagons, bombings day in and day out. Had only enough gas to put up one scout plane a day. Decided that they would "die in a manner that would make the folks proud of them." Would not surrender but take to the hills and wage guerilla warfare. The while they were discussing this, between listening to the radio and the latest news dispatched from Frisco, a smooth-tongued commentator on a national hookup out of Frisco told his millions of listeners "not to be surprised if Guadalcanal fell, that it was not important after all." "Then what in the hell did we come up here for? If we had that guy in our hands, we would have choked him to death, Father. We would die before surrendering, yet that guy and a lot like him had given up on us." Such were the remarks of these Marines to us today.

¹¹⁴ Beriberi was caused by a thiamine deficiency often linked to an inadequate diet, such as the rations of white rice that sustained Japanese soldiers during island warfare in the South Pacific.

Read Naval Intelligence reports on Jap prisoners. Most of them are very interesting. Story of military career, where they have fought, period in service, casualties in their regiment. All reluctant to talk until pressure exercised by telling them that names will be forwarded to Japan as prisoners of war. Then resistance collapses for if that information were received at home, they would be a disgrace to the family, the nation and the emperor.

One of the prisoners said that he knew Ralph Metcalfe, Eddie Tolan, Jesse Owens, all Olympic sprinters in '32. He had raced against them. He was Director of Physical Education at a high school in Tokyo when called to the colors.

One hill on Guadalcanal known as "Bloody Ridge" from number of Japs killed there; 700 of them to 84 Marines. Attack was one of three heavy ones, an all-out effort to retake Henderson Field. Other two were repulsed also. Had they been coordinated as they were supposed to be, as we found out from a captured Jap's diary, the Marines would have been wiped out. General [Alexander] Vandergrift did a marvelous job manipulating his few men to the point that was being attacked.¹¹⁵

One of the Marine officers shows me a translated page of a Japanese soldier's diary found on his dead body. Translation of one page of Japanese diary: "Today the weather became very fine. We worked in the telephone office for four hours today, two hours in the morning and two in the afternoon. We exchanged thirty rounds of artillery ammunition for thirty which we had previously issued. Evidently the old ammunition had become useless. We have not fired our guns since we landed. When the fighting is ended, we will probably have fired all our ammunition. Our intimates in our native land would be

uneasy for us if they knew we were fighting. However, at the present time things are very easy."

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 1943

We sight land on our port side, our first glimpse of New Zealand. We really are down under at last. Rugged, volcanic mountains rise up. Densely forested, save for an occasional one that, unlike the others, is out of step with its bare sides. The day is a stormy, windy one, with the wind howling in the shrouds, but the weather cannot dampen the spirit of the Marines. They are buzzing with animated conversation as they stand in line for breakfast.

About one o'clock we make a hard turn to port and head into what is said to be one of the most beautiful cities in the world. Wellington, named after the Duke who immortalized himself by saying that the "Battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton." There is no question that it is beautiful. The harbor is ringed by mountains rising up sheer from the shoreline. Here are real cliff dwellers. Houses are built right on the steep sides of the mountains. Apparently, no height is too steep to put up a home.

Ashore in the afternoon. My years in Heythrop from 1927-1930 return with a rush.¹¹⁶ This is a corner of the Empire. When inquiring for directions, once again a bobby is the guide. The ironmonger's shop is here and the chemist's and the draper's. The streets are alive with mid-afternoon shoppers. Department stores are doing a rushing business and the ubiquitous Woolworth's is too small for its patrons. On the trams the conductorettes are taking the tuppence and threepenny bits from the passengers.

I learn from a native of Wellington that an earthquake is responsible for the repair jobs being performed upon a dozen odd buildings in the heart of the busi-

¹¹⁵ The critical defense of the airfield, which took place over September 12-14, 1942, is better known as the Battle of Edson's Ridge, for Lieut. Col. Merritt A. Edson, whose Marine battalion played the critical role in the engagement. It is now estimated that the Japanese lost some 830 men. Foley's 84 Marine dead is accurate. Alexander Vandergrift, who commanded the 1st Marine Division at Guadalcanal did indeed, do "a marvelous job," as Foley put it, and was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for "tenacity, courage, and resourcefulness."

¹¹⁶ Heythrop College was a Jesuit institution near Oxford where Foley pursued graduate studies as part of his Jesuit "formation." Selection to Heythrop was a mark of honor for American Jesuits.

ness section. Last October was the month of the visitation. A lady ahead of me with her daughter points out as she remarks in what sounds cockney to me, “This is one that was knocked about badly.”

What I am thirsty for is a glass of milk after a long drought, so I pop into a tea room where I perform the old English ritual. First a plate is picked up, then a choice made of half a dozen kinds of sandwiches neatly cut into diamonds, then another choice of the cakes, delicious upon tasting, a baker’s dozen of those to choose from; whipped cream puffs are mine plus tarts. Puffs are running over with the cream. Here is abundant measure, pressed down and running over. I pick a table; the waitress inquires for my drink. “A glass of milk, please.” It is the richest, creamiest milk I have ever drank. It is so delicious that another one is ordered immediately. I haven’t had a glass of fresh milk since I was home in December. Norfolk’s product was reportedly not pasteurized so I didn’t venture that. But this!!

In one of the tobacco stores a typical English shopkeeper, the essence of courtesy and consideration, sets before me three booklets with views of the city. At another shop where I am puzzled by the rate of exchange, I ask the girl if she gets tired of being asked, “How much is this worth?” She replies, “No, as a matter of fact, I enjoy you Yanks.”

On a tram car I find myself sitting beside a Mr. Hunt, a man about 75 who informs me that he spent some time in Samoa with Robert Louis Stevenson. He seemed to be unacquainted with Stevenson’s famous letter to Mr. Hyde. Hunt was with Stevenson ten days before he died [of tuberculosis]; said that he kept himself alive by sheer will power.¹¹⁷ The only level streets in the city are those near the beach. The others climb right up the sides of the mountains, with houses seemingly precariously

perched on the sides, all of them surrounded by flowers. It is midsummer here, corresponding to the month of July back home. The rest of the year the temperature is slightly lower, but the only real difference is that it rains heavily in the non-summer months.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 1943

Ashore early to purchase some needed altar supplies; incense, charcoal, vigil lights, etc. Some books also, one of which would please my brother. America Speaks by Philip Gibbs [a prolific Catholic journalist], whose European Journey he gave me for Christmas some time ago.

Pass a tea shop; see in the window a luscious whipped cream pie, the kind that used to be in Lyndell’s shop window back home [in Somerville, Massachusetts], only not folded over. This acre of whipped cream is sitting on a deck of sponge cake with flaky macaroons on the top and a spoonful of strawberry Jello to add a flash of color. I collapse and sit down with a glass of rich creamy milk and that pie; the one and three is well invested!! I am making up for lost time. If my mother were with me, her diet would be thrown overboard before the lusciousness of the same whipped cream. This is no imitation either. Once in Norfolk [Virginia] I saw whipped cream éclairs, eight cents each in the window of a bakery. Two of them were full of marshmallow; both wound up in the street.

I visit the Church again, St. Mary of the Angels; kneel before the Pieta group, Our Lady holding Our Lord in her arms. The statues are life-size and the most striking I have ever seen. Our Lord is a dead man! There is no doubt of that. “There is no beauty in Him.” His eyelids are half open, the eyeballs have the dull glazed look of death, are half hidden under the eyebrows. His mouth is bloody, stained, cracked.

¹¹⁷ Stevenson’s letter, published as a pamphlet and much celebrated by Catholics, offers a spirited defense of Fr. Damien, a Belgian missionary Stevenson had met and who, from 1873 until his death in 1889, ministered to lepers isolated on the island of Molokai. Shortly after Damien’s death, the Congregationalist missionary Charles M. Hyde, also of Hawaii, wrote a personal letter critical of the priest. The letter found its way to publication in an Australian newspaper, ultimately eliciting Stevenson’s response. Fr. Damien was canonized by Pope Benedict in 2009.

He is what He was, a shattered remnant of a man, whose manhood was ploughed and furrowed by the lash of the Roman soldiers until He was no longer Himself. Our Lady is looking off into space with eyes that are most expressive. It seems that she was looking off to Bethlehem. There are a few teardrops around her eyes. She is heartbroken. Her skin has the warm color of life, but her eyes are what catch me. Then I discover the real reason. They are glass eyes, as natural as real eyes. This is the most life-like statue I have ever seen. One would have no hesitation in bringing a heartbroken soul in here. No words would be necessary. No matter what the cross, the soul would rise strengthened from seeing the agony written on Our Lady's face and the drained white countenance of Our Lord.

From the Church to the Botanical Gardens where salvia, bleeding hearts, carnations, azaleas, peonies, sweet williams, hydrangeas, larkspur are all in bloom. Recognizing the visitor as a stranger, an elderly lady instructs me to visit the Begonia House. I tell Mrs. Butcher about my mother and her love of flowers and how she would revel in the profusion of blossoms here.

Dropped into Rectory of St. Mary of the Angels to go to confession; met Fr. Stewart, a Marist. Had evening meal with them; mutton with carrot gravy.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 1943

A blustering day with the wind howling down over the mountains as we put out to sea. Instead of the four days here we expected and the eight that were asked for, we wind up with two. Men are disappointed for it is a delightful city. People are extremely friendly and courteous. As we make our way out of the harbor, everything is secured for sea. Wind "has a fit," as one of the passengers put it, howling in the shrouds again.

Our passengers this trip are a variegated lot. Carlson's Raiders, the Marines who raided Makin Island, a Jap possession, last August, destroyed all the installations, killed about 200 Japs, lost 34 of their own men. Before leaving the island, one of the officers told me that Col. [Evans F.] Carlson personally visited the body of every boy who was killed and folded his hands across his breast, took his personal possessions and sent them home to the boy's folks. There were two Japs who took to the hills, but "The natives would take care of them," as one of the Marines put it.¹¹⁸

Other passengers: New Zealand Radio Detection Group also bound for Guadalcanal; among them six Catholics. Also two Koreans with us who are in the Intelligence Department of the Marines.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 1943

Up at 0430 again as we head back north to Ed's territory. Temperature begins to climb to 100 degrees. We are hitting the tropics once more. With us are the [attack transports] Hunter Liggett and American Legion.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 1943

The other two ships break off for Noumea, New Caledonia. We continue on our way to "Button," code name for Espiritu Santo, New Hebrides. Ultimately we shall be at Ed's home in Guadalcanal.

We learn today that the casualties of the battle of the Solomons from January 29 to February 9 cost the Japs 15 ships sunk or damaged and 60 planes. Our forces lost 22 planes and two warships, including the heavy cruiser, Chicago. Happily I had gone aboard her and heard confessions and gave Holy Communion one week before. May all her boys who went down with her rest in peace! She was sunk [in

¹¹⁸ Makin Atoll was actually a botched affair, with the Marines forced to retreat from the island in disarray. (They left behind 12 prisoners, who were beheaded by the Japanese.) But as indicated in Foley's entry, the action—along with Carlson, a charismatic figure and an inventive tactician—was widely celebrated in the United States as a victory, with a movie account, titled "Gung-Ho!: The Story of Carlson's Makin Island Raiders" released in December 1943. Gung-Ho was a phrase Carlson had invented based, he said, on a Chinese expression he'd learned while serving in the 1930s as a military observer embedded with the Red Army. Carlson and the Marine Raiders 2nd Battalion redeemed themselves with their legendary "Long Patrol" behind enemy lines on Guadalcanal.

the Battle of Rennel Island] south of Guadalcanal the night of January 29, 1943 while protecting transport movements. She went down after two torpedo plane attacks. The second night, January 30, 13 planes attacked her while she was being towed. They got her, although 12 of the 13 were shot down after the attack by our own aircraft that intercepted them.¹¹⁹

Savo Island. Twenty destroyers approached there the Sunday night that we ran out. They were evacuating Japs from Guadalcanal. Wouldn't we have been duck soup for them! The place where they were taking off their men we could easily see when we came back the next day. After three Motor Torpedo Boats attacked them, two of the MTB's were unfortunately lost. It is clear now that both we and the Japs paraded a heavy array of naval strength, air-supported in the Solomons area. The Japs did not take advantage of Halsey's offer for combat. Then it became clear that the enemy was concerned only with evacuating its forces from Guadalcanal and hindering the arrival of our reinforcements, which again meant us!! The result was, instead of a big naval battle, a series of dogfights, all of which were fought between air and surface craft. The ships of the line never met each other.¹²⁰

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 1943

0445—Up again at early hour as we head back north.

0530—Mass Upper Deck Aft.

Bit of a blow this morning. Wind whipped linens off the altar as we started to rig Church. Finally were secured, fastened down with all-service thumbtacks. Candles were lit behind the stern of one of the boats. Placed on the altar, one puff of wind blew them out. The stars paling before the dawn will have to serve for illumination, those that will be staying out late.

During Mass, the rubric about extending the hands suffers a modification. Hands are occupied in keeping the missal pages from flying over and over. At Gospel time the sun crept over the horizon to adore with its fresh, clean rays the Lord who made it as He was elevated at the Consecration. In the west, the full moon has definitely lost her color. She can no longer, as the poet puts it, "look around her when the heavens are bare, for the sun has displaced her."¹²¹

Sitting next to me at table is a Lt. from Belmont who was torpedoed on the Yorktown and the Hornet. Yorktown was bombed at 930, 230 and 430. Finally torpedoes from our own destroyers put her under when she was dead in the water. She was their coffin for a lot of good men.¹²²

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 1943

Washington's Birthday.

"Tempora mutantur et nos mutamur in illis." Times change and we change with them, says the poet.¹²³ Fifteen years ago today Ronald McGilvary and I in England thumbed a ride from Heythrop [College] to Stratford on Avon where we paid our respects to Shakespeare Country. Today I am steaming east of New Caledonia on the way north to the New Hebrides, 15,000 miles on the other side of the world.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 1943

Up at 0330 this morning! Are we early birds! As usual, glorious morning. I say Mass at 0430, go up to the flying bridge, read my Office, watch a South Seas sunrise. I set the deck chair toward the east and note the moon is three quarters down in the sky and is rapidly growing paler and paler. Some forget-me-nots of the angels, as Longfellow called these stars that bloom in the infinite meadows of heaven, are lingering to keep the moon company.

¹¹⁹ See entry under January 21, 1943.

¹²⁰ See entry under February 8, 1942.

¹²¹ From Wordsworth's "Ode on Intimations of Immortality."

¹²² The *Yorktown*, a decorated aircraft carrier, was sunk in the battle of Midway in June 1942, with the loss of 141.

¹²³ See entry and footnote under January 27, 1943.

The sun will have to climb the mountains off our port side before it greets this new day. Once again we are running through the slot, islands on both sides of us as we get closer to “Button” [Espiritu Santo]. This long island on our port is densely covered with trees that begin right at the water’s edge. The tops of her mountains are wreathed with darkish clouds that will soon be bursting with light for their edges are beginning to be silvered. Then the white of the sky grows pink, then into a warm red. The clouds are on fire with flaming gold when the sun lights a rim slowly, but steadily, up from behind them. Another day is born. Now the mountains are a deep purple and on the ocean is a path of light as the waves sparkle in the early morning sun.

From the west two STDs, Scout Torpedo Dive Bombers, swoop down on us in greeting, then climb up into the blue sky. They are the dawn patrol, swinging up and out to keep the lines of our communication intact. “No interruptions,” is their motto.

Now we begin to see landmarks. We are back where we were on January 30, 1943. We disembark the Raider Battalion of Marines and anchor for the day at Espiritu Santo.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 1943

I board the USS Alcheeba [a cargo ship] with some books and magazines for her crew. One of them tells me that they have been sitting here in the channel for two months. On their sixth trip to Guadalcanal last November as they were about to drop anchor, Jap sub broke her periscope inside the screening force of destroyers, sent torpedo home into forward hold. Two soldiers lost who, panic stricken, jumped overboard and were caught in the suction of the propeller. Ship beached for four days. Unbeached shortly, she shipped two more torpedoes in engine room; lost seven sailors. Dead in the water, she was towed back to here. Decks like tiddly-winks [from “tiddly,” slang for drunkenness] from the heat of the explosion. Port side same wave motion. Holes in her side like piece of paper pierced by a pencil.

To shore; visit Church of St. Michael, little French Chapel seating 150; say Stations of the Cross for my father. Concrete floor; statue of St. Michael over altar. Into the corrugated tin-roofed, white-walled rectory where I met Fr. Jacque, 43 year old Marist, who has been in these parts for 16 years.

His dinner guests are a French trader, father of nine children who has been here for 28 years, and another priest, bearded, with twinkly eyes and a most kindly face, who has been here for 36 years, with one visit home after 21 years out here.

I forgot to mention that a native boy, nine years old, brownish black in color with yellow dust in his kinky hair, was the one who directed me to the rectory. In English he told me that his name was Joseph and that he liked Americans. He was a keen youngster who had picked up English from the American soldiers. Back to the ship where I count 52 ships; a lot of us here.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 1943

Sitting topside on the flying bridge this morning when seven dive bombers flew over, going north in V formation. Five minutes later they were back over us, practicing strafing the shipping. In broken formation on their own, they swooped and rose, banked and climbed up straight. It was frightening to watch them and to recognize that three seconds was the maximum time for getting a sight on them and firing had they been enemy planes.

We embark the 35th CB Battalion, bound for [the Russell Islands], our most advanced base north of Guadalcanal.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 1943

Second trip to Guadalcanal.

0445—Up again early as we head north through Torpedo Junction, islands flanking us on both sides. We are going at a slow 11 knot speed. Two Liberty ships—what slow scows!—hold us and the John Penn down. Three destroyers screening in front of us assure us of ample protection.

Rain is driving down hard. I hear confessions at night; excellent turnout. These men, majority of them Catholics from New England with Bostonians abounding, have no Chaplain. They seize the opportunity to go to confession and Mass.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 1943

Up at 0430. Mass at 0530 at which over 40 men receive Holy Communion. Day dawns bright and fair but promises to be extremely hot. Heat rash breaks out on us again. Doctors have it, too.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 1943

0445—General Quarters.

0555—Mass in Mess Hall; pouring rain outside so we're driven in. Again a splendid number of Communions. I compliment the men on their virile faith and their closeness to Christ. Day is dark, windy and stormy. We seem to be proceeding at a snail's pace when we can make 18 knots and are now down to 11.

Overhead Patrol Bombers, long distances, salute us with a dip of the wing on their port side as they fly by. They are the men who would report anything that might be lurking ahead for us in the shape of surface vessels.

MONDAY, MARCH 1, 1943

0330—Reveille. 0400—Mass. 0445—General Quarters.

0730—I shove off in a boat to track Ed down, for we are outside Guadalcanal once more. In ten minutes we run up on the beach, leap out into the surf, the tail end of a spent wave just grazing my heels and I start after Ed. Now he is twelve miles from here; the last time he was only one mile. The beach has no signs of habitation. About a quarter of a mile down, the first Army tents appear in the coconut groves and jungle. I identify myself and ask for permission to use the field phone. While waiting for the call to go through to Ed I notice a beautiful shadow cast on the tent side by a palm tree outside. The sun is throwing it full against the tent as though it were an

artist. "Study in Silhouette" would be an appropriate name, I muse to myself.

No business on the telephone call. Current is too feeble. I start hitch-hiking. A truck going for water is my taxi. Off we go through a field of cane grass. Whenever the makeshift road is too mucky even for a jeep, the driver swings off right into the cane grass that is higher than the jeep, puts it into four wheel drive and we swish through the new territory. Suddenly in the road a lake appears. The jeep can't make it. We swing off to blaze a new trail, then stop. We are in water up to our hubs. Out we climb and wade, one of the men and myself, he to get a service truck for the pulling job, I to hop another car if possible. No luck for a long while, so I take a swim then and there. Warm salt water rolling in on the beach that is about ten miles long, fringed by palm trees and coconut trees.

Finally it is noon time. I beg a sandwich at an Army camp down the road, then start again after Ed. This time I make it. Two detours through oceans of black mud that smells to high heaven hold us up for a while but we swim ahead. The mud is up to the hubs, but these jeeps are endowed with amazing drive. They roar ahead. We look back and the tracks have closed just as soon as we have passed; primeval ooze this. Overhead the parrots and parakeets are shrilling, talking; now and then a beautiful white bird about the size of a pigeon flies away in fright.

Onto the main road built by the engineers. From it clouds of dust are rising as heavy traffic crowds both sides of it. Over the Lunga River where Ed took some pictures on last meeting. I recall how utterly unconcerned he answered my question concerning something that started away from under our feet. A fleeting glimpse of it didn't allow me to identify it. "Just a lizard," says Ed, as though he had been living here all his life.

This is the jungle. By the water station a few miles back on the road, water is being sucked up from a fresh water stream, being purified before poured into big containers. While the driver was filling

up, I wandered back in behind the tanks. No sun pierced the heavy growth overhead. Tall trees were being strangled by thick vines; some were dead already, mats of heavy vines hung from others. The atmosphere was dank and the ground was alive with creeping, crawling things, lizards, bugs, etc. Through here the sun never came. The trees were alive also with talking things, toads and what not. The green hell of popular imagination all right.

My recollection of that bit of jungle was cut short by a sign now familiar to me after my last two visits, 101st Field Hospital. In three minutes Ed and I were together again, a happy reunion. Fr. Flaherty came along and I invited the pair of them to the ship. A jeep with Father as chauffeur started back again. He gave me the ride of my life, through black oozy mud and dusty roads until we hit the beach. Then he imitated the racers on the beaches of Florida. We raced along the hard-packed sand for about five miles. Every once in a while we would meet a group of soldiers and Marines whose day's work was done at 4:30 P.M. taking a swim in the blue waters off Guadalcanal. I pointed out one spot of historic interest, where I swam about 11 this morning. Onto our beach, into a boat, up the side of the ship on nets, decks, and the landlubbers were in my room. A steak dinner with all the fixings; fresh vegetables, real butter, (they hadn't had any for months), fresh peaches with ice cream, lemonade, Coca Cola, orange juice, etc., helped to atone for what they had been putting into themselves from cans. After the meal about 7 o'clock they relaxed in deck chairs for the next two hours. They were having the time of their lives just relaxing, drinking in the beauty of the star-filled tropical heavens and the lights of Tulagi off our port side. When they were ushered into the staterooms for the night they were afraid that they wouldn't be able to sleep because the mattresses were too soft after they had been sleeping on cots for months.

We fuel the destroyer USS Soufley on our port side. Ens. Lucier knows Fr. McInerney, CSC, a professor at Notre Dame, brother of the secretary to Fr. O'Connell at B.C. He helped to engineer the change of Football Coach Frank Leahy to Notre Dame from B. C. He spoke individually to the members of the Notre Dame graduate board, then saw Leahy in Cleveland.¹²⁴

One of my men in an interview tonight said that he was reading the New Testament, the section about "Knock and it shall be opened to you." "I'm going to keep pounding until I get what I want!" was his observation.

TUESDAY, MARCH 2, 1943

0600—I celebrate Mass with Ed serving and receiving Holy Communion. The folks back home will be glad to learn that our Mass was offered up for the entire family, living and dead. Fr. Flaherty followed on with his Mass¹²⁵ and I had the privilege of serving him. After breakfast they retire to the bridge deck by the Radio Shack where they ease themselves into deck chairs again and watch a destroyer come alongside the port side for a fueling operation.

Chief Bonnette calls up to say that they have some nice hot doughnuts below. Perhaps they would like them. They do! For dinner they choose another steak and fresh drinks, orange juice and lemonade. Believe it or not, but Ed and Father had to call a halt on their dessert; their capacity was exhausted!!! In the meantime, down below a box of oranges and apples and chocolate bars was being filled for the two generals.

When they left the ship about one o'clock, they were a full and happy pair. Fr. Flaherty said that the experience was as good as a furlough. Ed said that he might be in Fiji the next time I come around. Unfortunately, their regiment is being broken up and that means he and Father separate. May God

¹²⁴ Francis W. Leahy (1908–1973) led the Boston College football Eagles to 9-2 and 11-0 records in 1939 and 1940. He then signed as head coach with the football program at Notre Dame, his alma mater, breaking his BC contract. Boston College contemplated a lawsuit but did not file. Under Leahy, Notre Dame teams won 87 games and four AP-designated national championships over 11 years.

¹²⁵ Consecutive Masses—rather than concelebrated Masses—were the rule prior to the Second Vatican Council.

bring them together before long! They climb out of the bakery opening two-thirds of the way down the ship. The box is lowered after them into their taxi, a tank lighter, and they are on their way. I hope they enjoyed their visit half as much as I enjoyed having them with me.

5:30—We get underway once more, this time bound for Noumea, New Caledonia. A dozen Marines and two Army stowaways comprise our full passenger list. It seems strange to have no personnel to carry beyond those few. Usually we have thousands aboard. Our home is very quiet.

One of the Marines: “Where you people were is known as Steel Bottom Bay, there are so many of our ships and the ships of the Japs down there.” The comedian, Joey Brown entertained the boys last night. “Never knew I could swim so well until I tried to navigate your roads in a jeep.” Charlie Kirby, Jr. met him, excused himself after a minute. “We get to go up and bomb Buna [New Guinea]; see you when we get back.” As casual as that. Never knew when he might have a rendezvous with death.¹²⁶

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 3, 1943

0510—General Quarters. 0610—Mass. Cleanout of ship after the loading and unloading operation at Guadalcanal. A quiet day without any passengers aboard, the first time in months that we have been without some passengers. Ship is a quiet as a house after all the guests have departed.

THURSDAY, MARCH 4, 1943

Rough weather today, the first day since we left Cape

Hatteras on December 18, 1942. Some of the men complain of seasickness. We are steaming south through the Coral Sea, sliding down the west coast of New Caledonia. This is the graveyard of the Wasp, our splendid carrier.¹²⁷

FRIDAY, MARCH 5, 1943

Rough weather still with us in the morning, then it clears beautifully about noon. At 1:30 we sight an old friend, the postcard lighthouse on the strip of golden sand that we first sighted on last January 18, after our long trip from Norfolk. It is still as beautiful as ever, and the mountains in the distance and the coral reefs with the surf breaking lacy foam over them here ten miles off shore still fascinate us as we stand on the flying bridge.

Beside me, Van Auken, Electrician’s Mate 1/c, says that he intends to have some duty “round the anchor;” in other words, to take it easy while in port. He has been busy day and night. Says of one of his shipmates that he is a “bit left rudder,” i.e. slightly pixilated. He asks, “Do you remember how good the sight of this land was about two months ago?” Now we notice much more patrol activity. Lead destroyers are slicing the water on every side of us and a squadron of 21 planes deafens us with its roar overhead. They are flying in beautiful formation. Six fighters, Grummans leading the echelon, three torpedo planes following them and two more formations of six Grummans, an awesome sight as they streak over us lightning-fast.

SATURDAY, MARCH 6, 1943

I make arrangements today to have Mass aboard ship for men from the USS John Penn [an attack transport]

¹²⁶ Joseph E. Brown (1891–1973) was a convivial, rubber-faced movie and stage comedian who during the war traveled at his own expense to put on shows in military camps and hospitals. (The USO was at the time a domestic program.) In 1942 he lost a son in a military airplane accident. He was one of two non-combatants to be awarded the Bronze Star for service during the war.

¹²⁷ The grave of the *Wasp*, which was struck by three submarine-fired torpedoes on August 15, 1942, would have held particular resonance for Foley. Among the 193 men who were lost was Commander John J. Shea, a 1918 graduate of Boston College who was last seen directing a fire suppression unit on the stricken vessel and who left behind a powerful legacy in the form of a letter he’d sent to be held for his young son in the eventuality of his death. John, Jr. was five when his father was killed, and the elder Shea’s “Letter to Jackie,” was published in Boston after a family member brought it to the attention of a local newspaper. Shea offered plain-spoken counsel. “[T]ake good care of your mother. Be a good boy and grow up to be a good young man. Study hard when you go to school. Be a leader in everything that is good in life.” A sentence that Catholics found particularly appealing—as did the military, which assisted with the letter’s wide dissemination—read “Be a good Catholic, and you can’t help being a good American.” Shea was posthumously awarded the Navy Cross, the military’s second highest award recognizing valor.

tied up on our starboard side, the USS Argonne repair ship on her starboard side and the USS San Juan, one of the cruisers in the task force of the USS Saratoga, carrier. Latter is riding proudly at anchor about a mile from us. I still marvel at the number of men aboard “Old Sara.” Mr. Pound, Navy for 26 years, is the only man whom I have asked who came within 1500 of guessing how many officers and men she carries. He guessed 3000, only 200 short.

SUNDAY, MARCH 7, 1943

Mass at 0630. About 40 Communion, with most of the 150 from my own ship.

0900—Another Mass with about 150 men present from the ships around us, followed by Benediction.

I stay aboard this afternoon cleaning up a lot of odds and ends that were clamoring for attention.

MONDAY, MARCH 8, 1943

At five o'clock I go ashore to see Fr. Frank MacDonald, S.J., B.C., who is in excellent shape and has his little parish with the 37th CB Battalion on a straight course with smooth sailing all along.

TUESDAY, MARCH 9, 1943

To the Convent of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny to have linens done. Sister Joseph introduces me to the Sisters as Pere DePomes, “The Apple Father,” from my previous visit when I was loaded with apples for them. Into the classrooms also; about 80 little tackers, Japs, Chinese, Javanese, Melanesians. I give my blessing to all of them. As I extend my hands and close them, a

little fellow in the front row about six years old, all eyes, follows suit and then blesses everybody.

To the Movie Exchange Special Services where I pick up *The Story of Irene and Vernon Castle*¹²⁸ for tonight's show.

Ashore at night, the sentries look like men from Mars. They are hooded, with anti-mosquito nets to protect them from the hordes of nature's dive bombers; they wear gloves, and their trousers are tightly bound around their ankles. They make a weird sight as they step out from the pitch darkness into the glare of the headlights to challenge the jeep in which we were riding.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 10, 1943

Ash Wednesday. I distribute ashes at Mass this morning. Fr. Fred Gehring is my dinner guest. He was on Guadalcanal from September to February. What was most devastating and most frightening was the naval shelling from Japanese battlewagons below the horizon. Definition of courage framed by one of his men, “Fear saying its prayers.” Those men on Guadalcanal waded through blood and sweat, both their own; and their tears flowed for the days on which Fr. Gehring was burying 200 Marines a day for a stretch. Most effective page in one of the current magazines comes to mind. Soldier lies on his side dead, rifle stuck in the ground beside him, question is asked, “And You Talk of Sacrifice?”¹²⁹

Two deserters we carried down from Guadalcanal are taken ashore. Two rosy-cheeked boys about twenty-two years old. Trouble? One of them told me that they were working the Officers' Mess; were ordered to kill flies

¹²⁸ A 1939 RKO musical with a patriotic theme, in which Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers play Vernon and Irene Castle, a British couple who made up a wildly popular ballroom dance team in the early years of the century. The movie ends with Vernon Castle's death in a training accident after he enlisted with the British Air Force during World War I.

¹²⁹ Perhaps the most celebrated American chaplain of the war, Frederic P. Gehring (1903–1998), whom Foley had met at chaplain school, was a Vincentian priest attached to the 1st Marine Division who became known as “The Padre of Guadalcanal.” During the campaign he deliberately place himself on the front lines, made several forays behind enemy lines to find and rescue Catholic missionaries, and presided over and played the violin at a celebrated religious service held at midnight on Christmas Eve 1943, with 700 Marines gathered in darkness beside an open wooden church structure on the site of a previous church the Japanese had destroyed in a bombing raid. He was also known for his rescue of a wounded Chinese child, who was found abandoned on the island, and whom he named Patsy Li, nursing her to health and eventually bringing her to the United States for adoption. He was awarded the Legion of Merit “for conspicuous gallantry.

and did so. During the meal officers glared at them, made things most uncomfortable otherwise also. Commanding officer insisted they carry on without interruption; damned if they did, damned if they didn't. So refused to carry out the order, went over the hill. Were not front line troops. Such at least was their story.

During visit to Fr. MacDonald, man half-lit came in with friend; had just received word that his wife had dropped dead. Reproached self endlessly because in all her letters, including the last one, she begged him to go to church, but he still had yet to go. "Now, if only I could write to her and make her happy by telling her that I had gone. But she is dead."

THURSDAY, MARCH 11, 1943

Day passes quietly; unloading operations being carried out on a minor scale. Crew not thus engaged is busy painting the ship a deep blue color. Movie at night. The Magnificent Dope.¹³⁰ We had movies every night for a week. Army Special Services Department, Major Donnell in charge, generously allows me to borrow his films. Each morning I go ashore and surrender the old one and obtain another. Street scene: Three coal black natives who are talking at express speed in their own language.

FRIDAY, MARCH 12, 1943

Same routine as yesterday. Restful to go to bed these nights with no conjectures in the back of my mind. "Wonder if we will have to get up for General Quarters during the night." Don't have to rise at the peep, peep, peep General Quarters alarm in the morning either. I am having Mass each morning in the Junior Wardroom with about 25 men in attendance.

SATURDAY, MARCH 13, 1943

Confessions aboard my own ship this evening at 1800 o'clock, then I switch over to the USS John Penn where I hear them for an hour.

SUNDAY, MARCH 14, 1943

First Mass at 6:30 with about 75 attending, the majority of whom receive Holy Communion.

Second Mass at 0900. Church parties from other vessels come aboard. Fine looking young fellows, uniformed in their immaculate white. At the end of Mass, five men from a net tender ask for prayer books which I am only too happy to give them. Benediction at the end of Mass.¹³¹

This afternoon I was in the Cathedral ashore for the Vespers Service, Rosary and Benediction. Men on right hand side, led by the rich deep-toned voice of one of the Marist Fathers. On left, women and Sisters sing the alternate versicles. Directly behind me are three native women, rolling out the rich vowels of the Latin psalms and hymns as though they were to the language born. Universality of the Church: In the Cathedral are these native Noumeans, black, "Nigrae [sum] sed Formosae," French men and women, the French priests and Sisters, Marists and Sisters of the Order of St. Joseph of Cluny, American soldiers and sailors. Beautiful, as the full tones of the Gregorian chant fill the nave and echo back from the transepts.¹³²

MONDAY, MARCH 15, 1943

Word that we may be underway tomorrow for New Hebrides. Last movie tonight: The Male Animal, with Henry Fonda and Olivia de Havilland.¹³³

TUESDAY, MARCH 16, 1943

Last trip ashore; return the movie. Send a cable through Army PX for flowers for mother for Mother's Day. Also put an order in for Ed.

Jones, PHM [pharmacist's mate] 3/c attempted to commit suicide last night by taking about fifteen sleeping pills. Stomach pumped out, he is sent

¹³⁰ A thin 1942 comedy starring Henry Fonda and Don Ameche.

¹³¹ A net tender is a small vessel that maintains harbor fortifications.

¹³² "Nigrae [sum] sed Formosae references Song of Songs, 1:5, "I am black and beautiful."

¹³³ A Warner Brothers comedy of married life, starring Henry Fonda.

ashore. Had been brooding recently. Talked with him about his mistake at Suva, Fiji, when he took too much aboard on the one shore liberty the crew had. Seemed utterly disgusted with his performance. Since then read a good deal of Poe for whom he had great admiration.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 17, 1943

Feast of St. Patrick and Dismas. Underway for Espiritu Santo again with about twenty-five passengers.

Running each evening a Catechism class for four Mess Attendants. In the question period at the end, one of them wanted to know when Ash Friday was.

Street scene comes back to mind in Noumea. Tonkinese women with their coffee rolls doing a rushing business with our sailors. Their ice cream also goes quickly. They soon found out that an American sailor is always hungry.

Another street scene. On my way to the Movie Exchange, where Major Donnell is, hear somebody whistling the Woodpecker Song – do me sol ti re la; turn around expecting to see one of our soldier boys. It is a native dressed only in blue shorts, with a green fern strung through his mop of thick black hair. His black face breaks out in a broad smile when I look around at him. He guessed what I was thinking and said, “Me know too.”¹³⁴

THURSDAY, MARCH 18, 1943

Making good speed with the John Penn, the Algorab and a tanker. Stormy weather today; some cases of seasickness. One sailor to another, “Are you weak?” “I’m throwing it just as far as the other fellow, ain’t I?”

Arrive at Espiritu Santo at five in the afternoon. Dull rainy afternoon; same pungent smell, piney, rolls down with the wind from the densely covered hills between which this channel runs.

FRIDAY, MARCH 19, 1943

Back to our old stamping ground; third trip here. Sailor remarks, “We’ll know this part of the South Seas as well as our own back yard after a while.”

SATURDAY, MARCH 20, 1943

Letter from sister, Mary, informing me that they had received word that Ed and I had met.

Off our port side, seaplanes are tuning up their motors preparing to take off on their patrol. They spin around and around in the water as the pilot tunes them up to a full-throated roar, then lets them die down to a mutter. They straighten out for the long run between ships, trailing a white plume of spray as they increase their speed. After a mile run, almost imperceptibly they rise very slowly, then make a turn out to sea.

About nine o’clock a deafening roar as I sit in my room. Step outside. Fifteen Grumman fighters are flying in formation fairly low, patterns of 4, 4, 3, and 4. Suddenly they peel off to practice dive-bombing the ships in the stream. They swoop down, twisting and rolling mast high over the ship at blinding speed. A thrilling sight but we are grateful that this is a dry run, not the real thing.

Aboard come the soldiers of the Vermont National Guard with their Chaplain, Fr. Mahoney. Both of us hear confessions at night.

SUNDAY, MARCH 21, 1943

Up at 5 o’clock rigging the altar for Mass at 6 o’clock. Large number of Communions.

Fr. Mahoney says the 9 o’clock Mass. Splendid group of Catholics in his outfit, one of the finest we have carried. Three o’clock in the afternoon, Rosary and Benediction; about 300 in attendance.

¹³⁴ “The Woodpecker Song,” recorded by the Glenn Miller Orchestra, was a best-selling recording in 1940.

We get underway at 8:30, beautiful summer morning. Blue of the water contrasts sharply with the fresh green of the shore. Set against the green background is the little French Church with the half dozen houses, white-walled and red-roofed clustered around it. Outside a church party from one of the ships stands around, sailors in their immaculate white uniforms adding a lovely touch to the picture. Slowly we make our way through the submarine net, then head out for the wide stretches of the open sea. As we steam along, one of the soldiers points out the spot where the USS President Coolidge went down. These men were aboard her. When the men got ashore they had to cut their clothes off, for they were covered with oil.¹³⁵

Today is the first day of Spring back home. In their letters my mother and sisters are describing the fuel shortage and how cold it is. Here we are sweating in the summer heat. Three men aboard have heat prostration.

MONDAY, MARCH 22, 1943

0500—General Quarters. Once again we are underway and answer the peep, peep, peep of the GQ alarm by going quickly to our battle stations an hour before dawn, 0430!

0600—Mass. And Fr. Mahoney says his with a good number receiving Holy Communion.

Gunnery Officer says that they have received a report that enemy air activity is expected today. All the gun crews are alert, for two other convoys were attacked in this area recently. We are within easy bombing range of New Georgia, a Jap air base north of Guadalcanal. Rain comes down heavily and closes in all day, so elements help us and no planes bother us.

Captain gives me permission to go ashore tomorrow to see Ed again. We hope to take him and his buddies aboard. His outfit is due to be moved to Fiji

if it hasn't gone already. Here's hoping that he is a passenger. How pleased the family would be to learn that we had a cruise together again.

TUESDAY, MARCH 23, 1943

0330—Up and say Mass, breakfast, then ashore at 0730 to see Ed. This time fortunately we land just at the place desired, opposite Henderson Field. Down over the side in a cargo net, then into the beach in an invasion boat, with souvenirs on every side of the attack by the Marines last August; amphibious tanks, that are rolling back and forth with the tide; some of them within five yards of the shore, some overturned on the beach.

Thumb a ride with Red Miller of Granville Avenue, Medford; learn that he is to board our ship. Within ten minutes I am with Ed and Fr. Flaherty again. Ed gets permission to spend the evening with me; Father also. We drop in on Fr. Brock who is wrestling with his mattress, trying to beat it into some normal size before it is taken aboard. He is one of our passengers, which makes both of us very happy. Ed and Fr. Flaherty are staying behind to be picked up later. Ed is still trying for a psychiatric position with Captain Peel. He and Fr. Flaherty may be in a cadre that will be formed and then shipped back to the States. Here's hoping and praying.

Ed and I sit under a palm tree on the second fighter strip at Henderson Field and watch the squadrons of Lightnings and Aircobras come in, then climb up, swing the turn, peel off and follow each other at intervals of about three minutes. The last man of the second four almost met with disaster; I was just about to raise my hand in absolution from a distance. He landed at an angle, with his port wing almost touching the ground, then his starboard wing dipped dangerously. He made his decision in a split-second to swing up and come in again. Ed tells me that a slight puff of wind coming from an unexpected quarter sometimes causes these crack-

¹³⁵ See entry for January 30, 1943.

ups, one of which we almost witnessed but happily missed. Up and out he soars over where my ship is anchored, then coasts in and makes a perfect three point landing this time.

As we sit and talk under the palm tree, the fronds overhead are gently waving in the slight breeze. In the shade it is pleasant enough, but in the sun—oh my! about 120.

Suddenly a machine gun barks sharply three times, zing, -ng, -ng, the bullets sing as they fly across the airport. Ed casually informs me that the aviation mechanic pressed the wrong button on the plane and the bullets sped out. “Dangerous?” “That’s why the men duck instinctively around here.”

About one o’clock we make our way out to the ship, embarking in one of our invasion boats. The three of us, Fr. Flaherty, Ed and I, climb the gangway, look around the ship, meet Fr. Brock who is aboard, like everybody else surprised at the appointments of our vessel. I leave them to themselves, scout up the steaks for tonight, the peaches and cream. They sit down at 5 ‘clock to a meal which only ends when they have to admit that they can’t put any more away.

Nightfall we get underway, cruising to get away from the Japs. The crowd of us go topside to drink in the beauty of the full tropical moon. We are sailing directly into it as it rises. The ship ahead of us is directly in her path and we quietly remark on the beauty of the setting. On our left is Guadalcanal bathed in the soft light of the moon. On our right is Florida and Tulagi. Ahead of us a ship, like ourselves, behind us the same, while on our starboard our three destroyers patrol for us. Off in the distance are remote flashes of gunfire.

At 10:00 the boys retire to soft mattresses again.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 24, 1943

Mass at 5:30 served by Ed. We offer Mass for all the family, living and dead. The three of them, Frs. Flaherty and Brock and Ed look fine after their restful night. Fr. Flaherty leaves at 6:30 to say Mass ashore.

Ed leaves at 8:30. As we say goodbye, he says that he expects me back shortly. He is not disappointed at being left behind while the rest of his outfit goes aboard, for there is a good chance of his being a member of the cadre, the nucleus of a new division. If so, then he would be sent back to the States.

We learn this morning that while we were cruising last night, Maytag Charlie bombed Henderson Field, destroying four big planes, one Boeing 25 and 3 Liberators, and fired an ammunition dump. Lucky hits all. Recall the Photo Reconnaissance planes that Ed and I inspected. He said that they were blinding fast. Their one job is to take pictures, without a single gun aboard. They simply outrun anything that comes after them.

On the nose of the fuselage of one was painted a queer little fellow. He wore a top hat and tails, was apparently flying, with four legs dangling down; in his hands was a camera that he was pointing at the earth below. On his face was a big broad smile. We asked the mechanic what he was. “Shutterbug” was the answer. Same mechanic told us that the top speed of the plane was four hundred miles an hour. Her best weapon when she gets in trouble, speed.

THURSDAY, MARCH 25, 1943

En route to Espiritu Santo.

0445—Rise; Mass after General Quarters.

Beautiful summery day. We are bumping our heads against sunshine and tripping over fresh air as we slide through Torpedo Junction again. Mountains on either side of us wreathed in white cloud veils, without a sign of habitation on them; just dense foliage. Fr. Brock and companions enjoying every single minute of the trip.

FRIDAY, MARCH 26, 1943

0500—General Quarters.

0600—Mass, with Fr. Brock’s 182nd Regiment making a splendid showing, both here and also at Rosary in the afternoon.

Read of controversy in papers back home started by Rex Stout, Chairman of War Writers Board. His gospel is one of hate, according to the article that he wrote for the N.Y. Times in one of its January issues. Strange, spreaders of gospel of hate are those sitting behind comfortable desks, far from the front lines. I have spoken with men who fought in the second front in Africa, when soldiers from our own ship were assault troops; I have been with Marines on Guadalcanal, with soldiers of the 147th, 164th and 182nd Regiments and Carlson's Raiders, and not one of them ever said that he was motivated by blind hatred. Yet these are men who have killed their fellow man. Marine guarding Jap prisoners on their way to New Zealand, "I felt like a bully standing over these fellows with my club." Yet he had killed his share of Japs. Attitude of Leslie McNair, General of the Air Ground Forces, who made a speech in a similar vein, hardly squares with President Roosevelt's expressed wish that this war must result in a re-Christianization of the world. That means not when war is over, merely, but now also. Our boys are still Christians when they fight, not pagans. Their spirit with others is a duty to fight but not to nurse vindictive hatred. Their spirit within themselves is one of unselfishness, self-sacrifice, self-denial, unity, and cooperation for the common good.¹³⁶

Flare dropped on us by Jap plane last night at 10:45; we ran all out, fortunately nothing happened. Arrive at Espiritu Santo at 11:00. Word that we leave at 1430, but stay overnight. I slip ashore and try three other ships for 16 mm movies but have no luck.

SATURDAY, MARCH 27, 1943

0600—Awakened by roar of motors of planes tuning up for their dawn patrol trick. There are the big four-motored giants and the little scout planes. Day is a wet one underfoot and a cloudy one overhead.

1000—We pull up anchor and start our journey to Suva, Fiji. Day clears toward evening just before we have General Quarters. Fr. Brock and I hear confessions at night.

SUNDAY, MARCH 28, 1943

0500—General Quarters. 0600—First Mass at which about 85 boys receive Holy Communion.

0900 and 1100 Masses which Fr. Brock celebrates.

1000—Protestant Service conducted by Chaplain Franklin.

I must be the only Catholic pastor in the world who has three curates like my present passengers, a Catholic priest, a Protestant Minister and a Jewish Rabbi; the last ran his service at 1000 yesterday morning. All told we had the following services: Saturday: 1000—Jewish; Sunday: 0600, 0900, 1100—Masses; 1000—Protestant Service; 1500—Rosary and Benediction; Christian Endeavor Meeting.

Day indescribably beautiful; blue water, blue sky, blue mountains, blue ships, all of a different shade and all bathed in the brilliance of the tropical sun-

¹³⁶ The Writers' War Board was formed early in the conflict by a group of volunteers who offered to produce articles that would support war aims and American morale. By early 1942, under the leadership of the writer of popular detective fiction Rex Stout, the Board had more than 3,000 members. Stout's views on exacting harsh terms of peace from Germany, however, brought controversy to the group. Germans, he said, suffered from "pan-Germanism," a political sentiment that had led to two world wars and that needed to be harshly curbed if a third World War was to be avoided. The Foley-referenced article by Stout appeared in the Times on January 17th, and was titled "We Shall Hate, or We Shall Fail: If we do not hate the Germans now, we shall fail in our effort to establish a lasting peace." The article explicitly rejected the Christian ideal of love for one's enemy. While several liberal Protestant clergy rejected Stout's views, leaders of the Catholic Church were silent. Stout's views, it's worth noting, while radical, came relatively close to aligning with some American war propaganda, as in a War Department orientation film, *This is Germany*, produced in 1945 for American occupation forces. McNair was a senior Army staff officer who in December 1942, gave a controversial speech in which he told assembled soldiers "It is the avowed purpose of the Army to make killers of all of you . . . [W]e must hate with every fiber of our being. We must lust for battle; our object in life must be to kill; we must scheme and plan night and day to kill." He himself was killed—by American fire, it's believed—in Normandy in 1944.

shine. We slide along through “Torpedo Slot” with two destroyers, three in fact, patrolling for us. We steam between Amboina and Pentecost Island, pass Lopevi Island, active volcano, shaped in a perfect cone; last eruption in 1883.¹³⁷

MONDAY, MARCH 29, 1943

0315—General Quarters. Torpedo reported fired at us. We are at our battle stations quicker than you could say “New England T and T stock”.¹³⁸

General Quarters for half an hour. A near miss is as good as a mile. One more instance when the prayers of family and friends back home assured us of the protection of God and Our Lady.

General Quarters over, I say Mass immediately. No sooner finished than GQ again. This sub is persistent. However, he is apparently left behind after half an hour and we are on our way safely again. Down in the sick bay at my battle station with Dr. Harris and Dr. Daniel. Cooped up in the hermetically sealed compartment with all port holes dogged down and all watertight doors slammed shut, we sit and sit and sit. Only later do we below find out what the excitement is topside.

At 0445 topside, on way up to flying bridge to catch the sunrise. Five miles off our port side is a line of low mountainous islands, with a destroyer between us and them about half a mile away. Behind the islands are cloud mountains, not clinging to the top of the islands but rising up sheer as though somebody had them by the hair of the head. One of them soars up like the Empire State Building, stately and magnificent over those around it. The upper part all

along both sides, its pinnacle, is fringed with white that reddens into gold. The formation changes into two cloudlets with a deep dip between them. This valley is now crimson, now gold and then the sun lifts its head slowly up over the window of another day to see if we are still afloat. Meanwhile along the near horizon, companion clouds are purple on their peaks as they are touched by the rays of the sun that are arching now all over the blue morning sky. Another one of the masterpieces of God the Divine Architect who paints a different one every morning and never tires of His work.

Fr. Brock says Mass at 0600 for his men and members of my crew who were not free during my Mass. He finds the breeze blowing a bit sturdy but I tell him it is just a gentle zephyr.

The example of the Catholic men from Somerville and Medford, Charlestown and Cambridge, has been most inspiring.¹³⁹ They have attended daily Mass in large numbers and have honored Our Lady with her daily Rosary and sung out her “Mother Purest, Mother Fairest.” The sight of them kneeling on the rolling deck stirs the heart. Young, yet men who have been close to death, have seen their friends, over three hundred of them, die, men themselves who have killed an enemy who tried to do away with them by all kinds of tactics, e.g. two men advancing to surrender with hands over their heads, then when within a short distance of our boys, falling flat on their faces, while the machine gun strapped to the back of the first is operated by the second. No wonder our boys demanded that they surrender stark naked.

¹³⁷ Foley here names some of the islands in the Solomon Archipelago that run parallel to each other, forming a navigable channel—“the torpedo slot”—through which both American and Japanese warships engaged in the Guadalcanal campaign had to pass and in which they were vulnerable to attack. Generally, American forces ruled the slot during the day, while superior radar technology enabled Japanese forces to command the slot at night.

¹³⁸ The region’s first telephone service, New England Telephone and Telegraph, was founded in 1878 and subsumed a year later into the National Bell Telephone Company. Foley may have been referencing a Boston colloquialism relating to the speed with which the company vanished.

¹³⁹ Somerville, Medford and Cambridge are cities near Boston. Charlestown is a neighborhood of Boston.

Now these boys are going to Suva to engage in maneuvers for a future attack on New Georgia! They are due to stay in Fiji for ninety days.

At two in the afternoon we sight the lovely town of Suva once more, as picturesque as it was on its first appearance. The afternoon sun is bathing everything, the green of the hills is as fresh as ever and the houses and buildings as sturdy as when we saw them on January 26 for the first time.

It is now about six o'clock so there is no prospect of going ashore this evening even though our big ship has been carefully nursed through the minefield and is safely anchored port side to the dock.

I say goodbye to Fr. Brock, Dr. Whelan, who had Fr. [John L.] Bonn in class at B.C., and a classmate of mine, Col. Hogan, who received every day while aboard and knelt every afternoon for Our Lady's Rosary, a splendid example to his men. Chaplains Rothschild and Franklin also say goodbye. The 182nd Regimental Band that put on a jam session for the crew last night also leaves us, still happy over the steak dinner and apple pie and ice cream dinner we gave them in gratitude.

TUESDAY, MARCH 30, 1943

Peaceful night's sleep tied up to the dock.

0600–Mass, breakfast, ashore, after I say goodbye to Fr. Brock who stayed aboard after all with Col. Hogan from Wakefield. His boy was at B.C., one of my entering class when I was first appointed Freshman Dean.¹⁴⁰

Ashore where I buy two dozen bottles of Mass wine, which should keep me going for a while now, from a priest at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart.

Suva still as picturesque as ever. Muscular native policemen in their native scalloped white skirts, knee length blue jackets and blue belts, are in their

glory as they direct traffic flowing by in English style. Forward on the left hand side of the road and aft on the starboard. Huge heads of wooly black hair give them a formidable appearance.

Day is very hot. At noon everybody drops out of sight for an hour and a half. Noel Coward's song with the line in it about "Only mad dogs and Englishmen go out in the noonday sun" should substitute the word American for English, for only sailors and soldiers could be seen around here.

Overhead a dazzling blue sky, cloudless except for a space directly over the mountains, rising right over our shoulders. Those clouds are the signals of a hot moist climate down below.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 31, 1943

0600–Mass.

Into town again, walking leisurely along the road that leads to the Grand Pacific Hotel. There the romantic pictures of the travel books come to life. The hotel is situated right on the ocean front. Palm trees lean lazily over the waters of the blue Pacific, noiselessly rolling up on the beach. Out on the horizon lie purple mountains drenched in the brilliant sunshine. On the water a million and one diamonds are sparkling. Looking around the porch of the hotel are a few strangers like myself, admiring the manicured lawns tended by natives in shorts only. The hot sun makes no impression on their black backs. Parakeets and orange doves and wrens and finches are chattering away in the fronds of the palm trees overhead. One tree in particular has been so trained that it is a big fan, standing about 20 feet above the ground. The grass was refreshed about an hour ago by a shower, so it wears a wide awake look. It is as dry as a match shortly, for this hot sun challenges anything to stay moist under its rays.

I lie down to snatch forty winks on the sacred precincts of the lawn. The contented cluck, cluck

¹⁴⁰ Foley's full title at the time he entered the Navy was Dean of Admissions and Dean of Freshmen and Sophomores. He had previously taught Greek and English literature.

of a maternal hen foraging for her eight chicks, a domestic touch on the commercial lawn, wakes me from my South Seas slumber. After a half hour I am on my way back to the ship after saying the Stations of the Cross for my father in the Cathedral.

THURSDAY, APRIL 1, 1943
0600–Mass.

Ashore to the Red Cross outfit. On the way I pass a native fish market where the fishermen are selling their early morning catches to the native women. They are lined up together outside a square, wire-enclosed space in which the seller holds up the fish and seeks bids. The purchasers shrill out their prices good naturedly and smile at the one who has made a successful bid. The Mother Hubbard dresses are something to see on these women. They are of all colors, brilliant red, yellow, black or white or green or plain gingham. One gargantuan woman was adorned in a white one that housed her ample 250 pounds. Majestically, she swept along in her bare feet, while three youngsters clung to her for protection. Gaily she chatted with other women, utterly oblivious of the attention she was exciting. These people are delightful in their childlike simplicity. They are always smiling, men, women and children, with not a worry in the world. Beautiful regular features mark the women. The men are handsome also; they are black in color but not Negro in features.

From Red Cross, Mr. Asquith, Mr. Dyer and I obtain some gum and candy and peanuts. Clerk there asks me what kind of a Chaplain I am. “Catholic priest.” She tells me, “I am the wife of a priest, the Anglican Bishop here.” For a second I was flabbergasted. What does one say when told that you are speaking with the wife of the Anglican Bishop of Fiji? It seemed utterly incongruous to me as for a nun to say that she has a husband. I simply spoke a non-committal “Is that so?” and let it go at that.

SUVA STREET SCENES:

- Two swarthy native women wrenching away with their teeth at a foot of bamboo, tearing off the brown outside skin of the stalk and chewing the white celery-like rind and then spitting it out. Later I learn that they were munching sugar cane, not bamboo.
- A big, handsome physical specimen taking his morning market stroll with his wife and little youngster. He is wearing a white blouse and a red checkered wrap-around skirt that might have been taken from an Italian spaghetti restaurant back home. Sharp contrast with his outsize head of black hair and jet black skin. Feet, of course, are unshod. Wife is wearing a white petticoat down to her ankles with a pink dress almost the same length. Little girl is robed in flowing cerise dress.
- Indian woman silently pads by, on her face the tired look of centuries of oppression, it would seem. She is wearing a shawl of green looped around her head, over her shoulder and down to her ankles. A purple blouse and an immaculate white skirt make a beautiful color ensemble.
- By the side of a store, sitting on a box cross-legged, two East Indians are playing checkers. They are wrapped up in their game and don’t mind the Yankee kibitzer rubbernecking at them. He makes only eight! However, he keeps his tongue. The others give oral suggestions about possible moves. Both of the players pick up their checkers quickly and slap them down hard every time a move is made, like the flourish that some men make when they are playing cards.

FRIDAY, APRIL 2, 1943

0530–General Quarters. From Suva to Guadalcanal, again to flirt with death.

0600–First Friday Mass. Fine turnout of men of this 147th Infantry outfit. Catholics have had no priest for three Sundays. About 60 receive Holy Communion. Busy all morning attending to these men, most of whom come from Ohio.¹⁴¹

¹⁴¹ The 147th Infantry Regiment was an Ohio National Guard unit that took part in the difficult island battles of Guadalcanal, Saipan, Tinian, Iwo Jima, and Okinawa. Separated from the 37th Infantry Division in 1942, they were posted to the Pacific Theater as a “lost regiment.” They fought alongside the Marines but, to the chagrin of some, did not achieve similar approbation for their work. They were known as the “Gypsies of the Pacific” or the “147th Marines.”

Day is usual one; drenched with sunshine. Passengers are looking forward to their arrival in Guadalcanal, foolish boys, not realizing that they were well off at Fiji. Healthy, with good blood now in their veins, they will return, some of them, in fact the larger percentage, with unhealthy malaria germs in their bloodstream. The percentage has been as high as 91% with Marines.

On both sides islands have their headdress of clouds.

1500–Rosary and Benediction on Boat Deck Forward.

1800–1930–Confessions in my little cubby hole.

SATURDAY, APRIL 3, 1943

0530–General Quarters.

0600–Mass in crew’s mess hall. Temperature must have been at least 98. I do not perspire easily, yet my habit, alb and chasuble were all soaked with perspiration at the end of Mass.

0900–Mass in Senior Wardroom.

1500–Rosary and Benediction; excellent turnout.

MONDAY, APRIL 5, 1943

0445–General Quarters.

0600–My Mass was offered for my sister, Kay, whose birthday it was. In the evening, General Quarters from 8:30 to 9:10. Three Jap planes headed in our direction; fortunately they were turned back and we had a good night’s sleep.

Bad accident at 3:00 P.M. Heavy ramp on tank lighter gave way when the chain holding it snapped. Three men struck by it. One with a fractured skull, broken spine and severe internal injuries died three hours after the accident. Second man has concussion with split head requiring six stitches and the third has a shoulder that may be broken. Teeter from Oklahoma is boy who died; was college graduate. May he rest in peace! Protestant, so Protestant

Chaplain took care of him. Chaplain Uphall, the Army Chaplain travelling with the outfit.

TUESDAY, APRIL 6, 1943

0245–We rise to bugle of reveille! What an hour!

0300–Mass. We are arriving at Guadalcanal. As dawn begins to break, we make out what is now a familiar shoreline. Along the edges are the deep green coconut trees and in the background the light purplish blue of the mountains, wreathed as usual in their morning mists and veils of clouds. The sun starting to climb below the horizon and giving advance notice of its coming will soon dissipate them.

Hurrah! We are anchoring off Henderson Field, Ed’s stamping ground. The landing nets are lowered. Down climb the soldiers ever so cautiously. It is their first trip over the side with or without loaded packs. Three of them lose their grip and drop down about twenty feet. Fortunately none of them is seriously injured. They had landed on their buddies and the thick pack they carry broke the force of the fall. Down I go over one on the port side aft. In the boat are about forty soldiers anxious to set foot on Guadalcanal. In we make our way to our landing beach, hit it with full speed, lower the ramp and over it the soldiers and I step on the famous blood-soaked soil of this island.

I thumb a ride in a jeep to Ed’s location. I thumb really well now; simply stick out the thumb and the taxi, checkered or yellow, grinds to a stop. I pile in over assorted cargo, gasoline cans, water containers, picks and shovels and guns; secure a good grip on the canvas overhead, if there is one, and then take off.

This morning within five minutes I am on the way after saying goodbye to Chaplain Uphall, a fine fellow. Fr. Flaherty is in his tent talking with one of the men when I stick my head through the flap. “Well, it’s about time. Heard the ship was out there and was expecting you at any minute.” He looks hale and hearty, pulls out a picture of Commando Flaherty, taken by one of the boys. As the boys drop in he tells them that Life [Magazine] is looking for his picture.

Shortly, Ed is rounded up. He looks as well as ever. I notice that his hair is quite reddish as he stands in the sun; in fact, some of the men call him “Red.” Ed is now working temporarily with Mr. Gralnick, Red Cross representative. His work with Dr. Peel, the psychiatrist, has washed out. The Doctor whom we visit is flat on his back with jaundice and malaria.

This afternoon Ed takes his physical for Officers Candidate School. That decides him and Fr. Flaherty to go out to the ship immediately so that Ed will be back by 2 o’clock. In the meantime Fr. Flaherty manages to get two movies for me that will come in handy on the way back to Suva. Into the jeep we hop and are soon on the beach, then we climb up the long side of the ship, hand over hand on the ladder on the port side aft. Immediately the order is put through for filet mignons. Once again they feed their appetites, hungry for a good steak and finish up with ice cream and rich chocolate cake.

I pack a case with apples from the ice box, peanuts, gum and cigars for the boys. Fr. Flaherty needs some wine and hosts so I help him out with two bottles and 40 large hosts and 250 small. Down the landing net we go and head for the shore. Guadalcanal, just as the movies picture the South Seas Islands, clear blue water, white sand on the beach, fringed with overhanging palms and then a background of purple mountains. A remark about the beauty of it all leaves the pair of them cold. They want to see it from the stern on a ship shoving off for some other place.

The ramp is let go on the front of our boat. We wait for a small wave to recede so that we won’t get wet and then hop ashore. There we visit “Tojo’s Powerhouse—Now Under New Management” sign. It furnishes the power for the airport, the saw mill, water purificator, laundry, etc. There are two diesel engines built on a solid concrete foundation. A little platform about ten feet in height runs around it. Must have been small men to operate the plant. Back of the powerhouse is the river where the men are repairing the two bridges washed out by the heavy rains of a few nights ago. Men in their birth-

day suits are washing their jeeps and trucks of the mud collected on their trips.

Back in Fr. Flaherty’s tent I meet Frs. Dwyer and Frawley, Army Chaplains who arrived this morning on the ships in our convoy. Fr. Flaherty passes around the lemonade drinks to all and gives me a copy of a cartoon, “Midnight on Guadalcanal” showing what happens when Maytag Charlie starts the alarm. All the incidents actually happened. One man, a Colonel in the original story, is running in the dark plum into a coconut tree. Two others are arguing over who is the owner of a helmet, two more over the foxholes they belong in. One fellow is gingerly stepping along in the pitch dark, another is daintily carrying his two dog tags in his hand while a sophisticated cigarette hangs from his mouth. One moment later the driver of the jeep will make immediate and unexpected contact with a coconut tree, etc.

While we talk, music is echoing around the coconut grove from six loud speakers rigged in pairs. One pair is fastened to a coconut tree with a fine head of palms, another pair to a tall stump, souvenir of Jap naval shelling. The sun is high in the sky; now and then we must stop talking while a P-38 or an Air-cobra roars by after taking off down the road. This morning we saw the tragic remains of O’Sullivan, a P-38 pilot. He underestimated the landing strip coming in at night and cracked up. Only a shell of the plane remains. The boy, 22, died from his injuries. He had been in 30 combats without suffering a scratch.

On the way back to the ship, farewell till the next time. Ed is told that his eyes are so poor that there is little chance of his making OCS. He is disappointed. What a waste of talent in that Army. He is typical, I am told. College graduate, equipped for a specialized branch, psychiatry, yet he mixes unguents and ties knots in bandages.

Off our port side, a P 38 well shot up, pancakes into the water, plunges down immediately. Pilot, thank God, bobs to the surface after some seconds although it seems hours. “As many planes smashed in this

drink and on the field as are lost in actual combat,” comments a soldier who has just left the island. We steam over in the direction of Tulagi at dusk. General Quarters about 6:20, over in half an hour. I go topside, step outside the door leading to the deck, looking for a light here and there on Guadalcanal. Wonder if one spot that I see is where Ed and his friends are looking at *Priorities on Parade*, the movie for tonight.¹⁴² After a few minutes three planes with their port red and starboard green lights are landing on Henderson, its strips lit up by the yellow smudge pots. Suddenly everything is inky black. One searchlight reaches up and out through the South Seas summer night and fingers the heavens, then another and another, until there are half a dozen. They converge on one spot. The shoreline suddenly breaks out in a sullen roar at the juncture of these lights. The Fourth of July has arrived a bit early. Overhead five inch shells are exploding all over the sky. They explode, blossom out into all colors. On the shore there is an angry roar of guns and tremendous puffs of white yellowish smoke illuminating their location for a fraction of a second.

I go to tell the doctor to come out to see the free show. Then “Tweet, Tweet, Tweet, Tweet, Tweet.” General Quarters. We sit and sweat in the sick bay for one hour as the shore installations try to beat off the four Jap planes that dropped flares just where we were anchored two hours ago. Tulagi also opened up on the raiders. Perhaps tomorrow we shall know what the damage is. General Quarters over. One casualty, one of the soldiers who had just come aboard fell four decks down into an open hatch. Back injury; saved from death by landing on cargo nets.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 7, 1943

0500—General Quarters. 0540—Mass.

After cruising up and down all night, we are anchored in Tulagi Harbor. Round us are three cruisers and six destroyers.

Tulagi is a small island ringed with the usual palms at the water’s edge. Up the face of it rise sheer cliffs of dark brown stone. On top of it are gun emplacements to knock off the Japs. One tip of it is a narrow finger with 28 coconut trees lacing its shoreline. On this are USA Army troop tents. Directly behind is Florida Island and over to the north, Gavutu, which cost the lives of hundreds of Marines. For here was the bitterest opposition in the whole Solomons, from the Imperial Marines, six footers from Northern Japan. There is just a small landing beach which was completely dominated by Jap machine guns. As on the rest of these islands, the growth of vegetation is apparently overnight. The green of the trees and coconuts has the freshness of the spring green back home.¹⁴³

At 1000 we hoist the anchor and start across the water for Guadalcanal, one destroyer clearing the lane for us. Although she looks close, Guadalcanal is 20 miles away. At 1100 we are coasting along, when the order is suddenly passed to secure for sea. The trip ashore of the mail orderly is cancelled. Fr. Flaherty and Ed are left on the beach. We are underway; the Hunter Liggett has left most of her boats ashore with their crews. Jap plane raid on the way. “Air attack developing.” Day is now cloudy, ideal one for the planes to cruise high and then swoop down through.

1205—Had just sipped a glass of lemonade, about to start dinner when General Quarters sounded—“Tweet, Tweet, Tweet.” We have been running about an hour, seventeen knots south of Henderson. Wonder if this is it. So far we have been extremely lucky, being either too early or too late for a date with Tojo’s boys.

AIR ATTACK—GUADALCANAL.

2:40 P.M.—From the bridge, “60 enemy planes over Guadalcanal.” We are about 40 miles south of Guadalcanal.

¹⁴² *Priorities*, a 1942 patriotic trifle, tells the story of a struggling big band (“Jive Bombers”) whose members work in an aircraft factory. Discovered by a talent agent, they are invited to play in New York City. They decline, preferring to continue in their defense work.

¹⁴³ The Marines lost 122 men on Gavutu—Tanambogo. In re the Imperial Marines, see Note for February 11, 1943.

2:45 P.M.—Also from the bridge, “Enemy planes astern!”

Dr. Harris and I go out topside to the main deck. Five miles astern is a tanker with a destroyer escorting her. About eight planes are wheeling over them, dropping patterns of bombs on tanker. Two seem to be near misses. Torpedo planes start to peel off one by one, level out, then three of them hit the water. High up in the sky are the black blossoms of the anti-aircraft shells. Later, destroyer reports that she brought down four planes, three Jap and one of our own, a Marine Captain, whose body was recovered.

Off to the west, squadrons of planes darting in and out of the clouds look like black flies from the ship and are about ten miles away.

4:40 P.M.—We are finally secured from General Quarters, an afternoon that we won’t forget for a long time. No rest for the wicked.

10:00 P.M.—General Quarters; lasts only ten minutes. Destroyer astern reports to the Commodore of the Division that she has just destroyed a Japanese submarine. It was surfaced; she fired a broadside, then laid a pattern of depth charges. Debris, clothing and food came up from the depths.

We wonder how the boys on Guadalcanal made out. This has been a hectic trip. Last night, a night attack; today, another attack; tonight, a sub following us. Our Lord, however, has been taking care of us. The folks back home certainly are praying for us. Without a doubt, prayers are winning God’s protection.

THURSDAY, APRIL 8, 1943

0510—General Quarters. 0600—Mass on Boat Deck Forward.

A quiet day after yesterday’s excitement; we appreciate it. Yet strangely enough, after the initial skipping of the heart at the General Quarters alarm, one can watch with amazing detachment an attack on another

ship, even though within two minutes we could have been the targets.

FRIDAY, APRIL 9, 1943

0515—General Quarters. 0600—Mass in Junior Wardroom.

One of the Officers aboard tells me that a Holy Cross football guard by the name of Carroll, a Marine 2nd Lt., with two other Marines put ashore the other day at Munda, a Jap held island, to act as spy and lookout. Three Sisters were evacuated by submarine from the same island a short while ago. They are aboard one of our ships, either the Hunter Liggett, the Fuller or the Penn.

SATURDAY, APRIL 10, 1943

No General Quarters. 0600—Mass.

Navy issues the following communiqué about the battle on Wednesday: “The Japanese, in their greatest aerial thrust against the Guadalcanal area since last November, hurled almost 100 planes against American shipping yesterday off that battle isle. American fighters, rising to intercept, shot down 37 enemy planes and lost seven, the Navy disclosed today, a ratio of one to five.” Whether any bombers got through to attack the ships was not made known. Here is what happened to the force of 50 Jap bombers and 48 fighters escorting them, according to the Navy. Twenty-one zero fighters, five dive bombers and 10 planes of types unreported destroyed, and another Jap plane crashed. United States planes lost were one Aircobra fighter and six wildcat fighters. One American pilot was rescued. The Navy communiqué at which Secretary of War Stimson said that Jap air strength is growing in the Lower Pacific, he added that American strength has increased also and further increases are in prospect in China, India and the Southwest Pacific.

“Whether any bombers got through to attack the ships was not made known.” A significant omission! We lost six ships! Jap version over the radio. Losses: Six planes

sunk; five medium freighters (Liberty ships?), one eight thousand ton transport, one cruiser, one destroyer.¹⁴⁴

12:45 P.M.—Concert by Regimental Band, Boat Deck Forward. Solo: “I’ve Got a Date with a Foxhole.” Smash hit!¹⁴⁵

SUNDAY, APRIL 11, 1943

0600—Mass. 0900—Mass.

At ten o’clock we are heading into another port of Viti Levu, Lautoka; much different in its approach from that to Suva. Here are low foothills with cultivated farms along the shoreline. All over the sea for five miles are dribbles of islands, some of them only about 1000 feet square, yet densely wooded. Looks as though farmer scattered his seed over a watery pasture.

Tom Keenan from South Boston comes aboard when we anchor off the one dock in the stream with invitation from Major Jim Collins, MC, for dinner. Had Jim in class as a sophomore at Holy Cross. Away to their screened-in dining room overlooking the South Seas, shoreline scalloped with a dozen inlets.

Meet Doherty, Zagami, McLoughlin, McKeon and Misses Flannery and Downer, Army nurses from Worcester and Cambridge respectively. Visit Church and say the Stations for my father. Meanwhile birds of brilliant plumage are flying overhead in the trees. One of them with the melody of a robin in his song; he is no red breast but green, orange and white.

We debark 1600 troops, 132nd and 182nd, Colonel Goggin and Major Granstock.

While sitting on the Collins’ porch a party of four suddenly came through the screen door from the dining room with a General. When he entered, all rose to their feet, the five of us. He looked at me and said: “This place looks like hell; clean it up.”

MONDAY, APRIL 12, 1943

0600—Mass.

We embark 1700 troops, 200 of whom will be debarked at Suva. Half an hour before midnight I go out for a breath of air before turning in. Scene of beauty in capital letters. Moon is half size and about one-third up in the sky over the sea horizon. No ghostly galleon tonight, just as lazy as the clouds which are motionless, only a handful of them. Water is gently rippled by a South Seas zephyr. To the left of the moon something I have never seen before. She lights up a path along the water to the ship. Two stars are shining so brilliantly that their star light silvers a lane to us also. The sentry and I drink in the lovely beauty of the scene. His name, Milt Brown from Tuscaloosa, Alabama. He reckoned, “I’s never seed anythin’ so pretty.” Slender pencils of starlight on waters of Fiji will not be forgotten for a long, long time.¹⁴⁶

TUESDAY, APRIL 13, 1943

0600—Mass

0900—We leave Lautoka and steam leisurely down the coast and anchor at Suva at three in the afternoon.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 14, 1943

Anchored at Suva. I have two movies; “Death of a Champion” and “The Saint in New York.”¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁴ Operation I-Go, which included 350 aircraft, was a Japanese aerial offensive in the Solomons that ran from April 1–16 with the goal of damaging American facilities, air forces and craft sufficiently to buy Japan time to strengthen defensive positions to the north. The Japanese lost 55 planes in the operation; the Allies lost some 25 aircraft and five ships. Japan claimed to have destroyed 175 aircraft and 28 ships.

¹⁴⁵ “I’ve Got a Date With an Angel” was a 1931 British pop hit later covered by many American performers.

¹⁴⁶ Brown, was a member of the Army’s 147th Infantry Regiment [see note for April 2, 1943]. He returned to Tuscaloosa after the war, where he raised a family and worked for a tire manufacturer. At the time of his death, on March 21, 2004, he was 83.

¹⁴⁷ A low-budget Paramount who-done-it about the “murder” of a dog, and a popular RKO film about the murder of a policeman.

THURSDAY, APRIL 15, 1943

3:30 P.M.—Underway for Guadalcanal again with 145th Regiment. Officers and men extremely apprehensive when they learn that we were under attack last trip. Betray anxiety in questions they ask, remarks. “Quicker we get there and get off, better we’ll like it.”

Soldier, as we leave harbor and slip between two coral reefs, takes a last look at Suva and says, “Love and mud, goodbye. How I’d like to be back with you.”

Saw a very good appraisal of Rex Stout’s hate article in the New York Times, last January issue. “The bloodthirstiness increases with the square of the distance from the actual battlefield.” Would apply also to Gen. McNair, of Army Ground Forces.¹⁴⁸

FRIDAY, APRIL 16, 1943

0555—Mass; excellent turnout.

Soldiers and their officers are lost when they ask for directions and receive them in Navy language, e.g., Starboard side inboard on the Upper Deck Forward. One officer asking directions instructed the sailor, “Now don’t tell me, just point.”

Captain Love: Reconnaissance problem in Fiji. For 40 miles in the hills, no road, only a trail. French missionary and entire village of 500 Catholics started the day with Mass and ended it with night devotions, Rosary and Benediction. When this officer and his four men on their scouting problem first arrived, they made themselves known to the priest. Young natives and old didn’t know what to make of them. The five Americans decided to go swimming. The officer emptied his pockets while the native youngsters stood around in wondering silence. As the contents of the pocket of the officer saw the light of day, knife, coins, etc. came out, then a Rosary, one of the native boys let out a shriek, bolted away and told the priest. The priest came and told the officer,

”Youngster tickled beyond description to find that you were a Catholic same as the rest of them.” From that moment the boys and the soldiers were friends. They went off down the road on the way to the river together.

SATURDAY, APRIL 17, 1943

0600—Mass.

Our convoy is steaming ahead making good time as we head north to Guadalcanal. With us are the USS Penn, Fuller and Hayes, three combat ships like our own. Sub contact but no General Quarters, for it is off to a distance, destroyer reports.

SUNDAY, APRIL 18, 1943

0600—Mass, Boat Deck Forward

0900—Mass.

1000—Protestant Service. Chaplain Wearing from Ohio.

2:30 P.M.—Rosary and Benediction. Over 250 men present to sing Our Lady’s hymns, to say her Rosary for the folks back home and for God’s protection on our trip.

Planes overhead from carrier nearby give us a feeling of confidence as we come closer to Guadalcanal. They are flying in square formation¹⁴⁹ over us, and their carrier floating base and protecting destroyers.

MONDAY, APRIL 19, 1943

0500—Mass.

About 7 o’clock we find we are running alongside of Guadalcanal on our starboard side. Off in the distance is Florida with Tulagi in front of it and far on the northern horizon, Savo, of melancholy memory where we lost four cruisers in a sudden attack of the enemy last August.

¹⁴⁸ See entry for March 28, 1943.

¹⁴⁹ Four aircraft with two in front and two behind, wingtip to wingtip.

The peaks on Guadalcanal are now familiar friends. A deep purplish blue in the distance, they contrast sharply with the green of the palm trees and coconut groves near the water's edge. As usual, the day is a drenchingly beautiful one. Not once have we had a bad day for our unloading operations.

I wonder how the boys ashore are. Last night we know they had trouble, for "Condition Red"¹⁵⁰ was set on Guadalcanal all night. Shortly I shall have the story from Ed and Fr. Flaherty.

I climb into the net over the side, drop into a boat and we are off to shore before the ship has stopped. We run for about three miles and ground on Kukumbona Beach, the scene of bloody fighting between us and the Japs. Just off to the north are beached two Jap transports, one on its side, the other half way up on the shore. Just a shell of her former self; apparently was a passenger liner. Was a victim of "Slaughter Run" of our bombers from Henderson [Field]. Dropped their eggs, then landed at Henderson for more, repeated trips until Jap transports, five of them, were pulverized.¹⁵¹

Just behind the beach coconut trees have their heads sheered off, grayish white trunks are scarred and slashed by shells from artillery and naval guns.

Have steaks and candy and cigars for Ed and Fr. Flaherty. Thumb a ride from Major Beal of the 147th. As we bump along a trail, see grim reminders of the savage struggle. Here a hastily dug grave with a cross over it. There a piece of Jap artillery that had been abandoned. Alongside the road, two tremendous bomb craters from our own flyers who were pounding the Jap front lines at the time — November, December, January — located in this area, which is about 12 miles north of Henderson Field.

After a half hour ride I am saying hello to Ed and Fr. Flaherty, both of whom are in the pink of condition, though they could use a little sleep. They were up all night. Tojo's boys called on them and dropped his mailing cards. Really is pouring it on these days. Said they were worried about us a week ago Wednesday when 98 planes came over. Fortunately, none of us the worse for the wear.

We visit the refugees whom we are to take aboard our ship; three nuns, Marists, and 34 assorted Chinese, Fijians and half castes. Nuns have been through a lot. Two months running from the Japs over mountains, across rivers, living in the bush, with one Sister having to be assisted by the other two, ages of two about 55 and the other about 45. They say they will be happy to come aboard after the bombing of last night.

Leave them and go to Henderson Field Cemetery, bordered by palms. Poignant graves there. Pilots killed have blades of propellers stuck in their cement headstones. One also has two noses from engine heads. Another propeller blade has a hole gashed in it about an inch and a half in diameter. Did this kill him eventually?

Some of the soldiers have the aluminum tin tip of their mess gear set in the cement square marker with appropriate epitaphs by their buddies. One of them:

"Here sleep the brave who sink to rest,
By all their country's wishes blest."

NAME: Eugene Bober, Radio Gunner¹⁵²

Another grave has written, not in flowers as back home, but in machine gun bullets. The name "Eddie Grave" is ringed with clips of same bullets.

¹⁵⁰ Slang for "Readiness Condition"

¹⁵¹ On November 14, 1942, a large group of Japanese troop transport ships entered waters near Guadalcanal without escort vessels. Over the next days, 11 were destroyed, most by aircraft from Henderson Field, from which pilots made sorties, returned for fuel and ordnance, and set out again.

¹⁵² Eugene Louis Bober, assigned to the First Marine Aircraft Wing, is listed as killed in an aviation accident on January 21, 1943.

Another epitaph: “A fine Marine; a fighter all the way.”
On that grave are two shell cases standing at its head.

Draped around one cross is a Rosary, rusted, weathered, but still with its owner.

Breathe a prayer that God will have mercy on all their souls, Catholic, Protestant and Jew.

Life, March 1, 1943 edition, has picture of Memorial Mass celebrated right here. I stand at the altar looking over the broad acre of God’s dead who now sleep the sleep of the just, with their arms stacked forever. Buried far from home, with their graves being tended by two dozen swarthy natives, one wonders at the senselessness of man warring on his own kind. How many careers here are blighted forever, how many blasted ambitions, above all, how many broken hearts back home. May God give these eternal rest and those back home the courage to carry their heavy cross. These pictures in Life will bring tears to the eyes of about 1400 mothers, the number of boys buried here. Such are the spoken thoughts of Fr. Flaherty, Ed and myself as we wander slowly around.¹⁵³

We leave behind the cemetery and call on Fr. O’Neil, Navy Chaplain, who has as his guest Bishop Aubin who is out at the time we call. Receive some palms that he blessed.¹⁵⁴

Call at Port Director’s Office where I pick up two charts of the waters here around Guadalcanal and Tulagi and Florida Islands for the Navigation Officer. Learn that transportation has already been arranged for refugees to go out to our ship.

Decide not to wait but into the jeep again for the 12 mile trip, over good road for 7 miles and no road, just a wide trail through the jungle for five. Dust is flying as we rush along in a “hot car,” one that Moe

Edman “appropriated” on the beach one day. We pass a number of MP’s who don’t stop us to find out what our number is; they have an order to pick up every unregistered car. This jeep is one that isn’t registered.

After bouncing along for forty-five minutes we debark at my little beach. There Fr. Flaherty espies a beautiful seashell which he gives to me. Off in the water of “Steel Bottom Bay”¹⁵⁵ our ship is swinging around her anchor leisurely while the unloading operations carry on. I say goodbye again to the boys and board a boat for the ship. Right here just ten days ago on our last trip four ships went to the bottom, one of them a destroyer which lost forty men, a victim of a Jap dive bomber. One of the coxswains of the boats picks up a skull that floats ashore, a grim souvenir. Bloody waters, these.

Aboard once more, when the Captain calls to find out the story of the refugees. No sign of them as he scans the horizon with his glasses. The trip from Kukum [Airfield] to here should take about an hour and a half.

About five-thirty, after we are underway in their direction about 15 minutes, we take them aboard. They are huddled in a tank lighter as they come alongside. I introduce the Sisters as they come aboard. The little Chinese kids are howling with full lung power as they are carried up the ladder by our strong sailors. They want their mamas. Set down on the quarterdeck, they instantly quiet down when mother climbs the starboard gangway and slings them in the saddle, multi-colored, black, green and red on her back. One little tacker about two years old is screeching at the top of his lungs until his little sister, all of four years old, swings him on her back. Off we go, Sisters, Chinese, Fijians, myself leading the procession to their staterooms where they marvel at their quarters. A bath, a cold drink and a

¹⁵³ The *Life* article is: “Guadalcanal Diary,” by Richard Tregaskis. The Christmas service, described above in a note to March 10, 1943, is pictured.

¹⁵⁴ Born in France, Jean-Marie Aubin (1882–1967), of the Society of Mary, came to the Solomons in 1909. He was bishop of a portion of the Solomon Islands from 1835 to 1858.

¹⁵⁵ See entry for March 3, 1942. Also referred to as Iron Bottom Bay or Iron Bottom Sound, the stretch of water south of Guadalcanal and the Savo and Florida islands is formally known as Savo Bay, and scores of ships, American and Japanese, were sunk there, including the light cruiser USS Juneau, whose casualty list famously included the five Sullivan brothers of Waterloo, Iowa.

hot meal make them forget their ordeal. Before long they are sound asleep in bed.

TUESDAY, APRIL 20, 1943

0500—General Quarters.

0600—Mass. Three Sisters receive Holy Communion first. Quite a cosmopolitan congregation I have.

Sisters names are Mother Ignatius, Sister Mary Adelberta and Sister Mary Martian. They tell me that since December 28, 1942, they have been playing the unpleasant role of refugee. Then they took to the jungle on Bougainville when the Japs were chasing them. From that date until April 1, 1943, they climbed mountains, slid down trails, forded rivers, slept in the jungle, hid in the bush, always running from Mr. Jap when warned by the natives. Finally they made contact with some Australian lookouts, our spies who notified Guadalcanal by radio. Then a submarine, the Nautilus, came up to take them off. On the afternoon of the scheduled evening of their departure, two Jap boats landed, in plain view of the Sisters in hiding in the hills. Then after a while the troops shoved off with pigs and hens in their possession. Nightfall, from every side canoes came into the cove. The party of 37 shoved off in them, onto the deck of the submarine and then two days and two nights below in the cramped sub quarters until a sub chaser took them off a couple of miles from Guadalcanal and debarked them there.

One of the Sisters was barely able to make the gangway. She limped badly. She tells me that she has a sprain from sliding down a mud bank into a river. For the youngest it is her second trip “aboard a steamer” in 25 years! The first was the one that brought her out here!!

Dr. Oliver and I are in charge of the big family, myself eating with them at all meals. They spend the afternoon enjoying the sunshine and the breeze. Fortunately these are the days of summer glory, just what these poor victims of the war of men need to build up their strength again. At supper we have ice cream, the

first time the youngsters have had it. They are pleasantly surprised at the coldness of it. After a mouthful they rush their hands to the mouth and look around with expressions of shocked yet pleasant surprise. They obviously fall in love with the vanilla flavor and chocolate syrup. And so to bed.

Lt. Oliver, one of our ship’s doctors, had an intelligence session with our guests. This was his report to the Captain to be submitted to Naval Intelligence Headquarters on our arrival in Noumea, New Caledonia.

Refugees from Bougainville

As we approached Guadalcanal on April 18, 1943 we were notified that 38 Chinese and Fijian women and children were to be sent aboard for evacuation from the island. After we arrived the next morning word was sent out from shore that there were three Catholic Sisters, three Fijian women with eight children, and five Chinese women with their 18 children who would be sent out to the ship at 1300. We awaited their arrival until late in the afternoon when we had to get underway without them. But had gone only a short distance when their boat arrived so we stopped and they all came aboard up the gangway. In spite of their long trip with its hardships they were all in good health. The children were all sleepy as there had been an air raid the night before which kept everyone awake. The refugees had all arrived at Guadalcanal on April 2, 1943 after escaping from Bougainville in an American submarine. They had been gathered from all parts of the island to meet the submarine at Tjop on the NE aspect of Bougainville. Two of the Fijian women were the wives of Methodist missionaries and originally had been on Buka Island where their husbands had been at the mission for 23 years. In January, 1942 the first Japanese visited Buka but only stayed two days. A few days later they returned to gather more information and killed an Australian living there when he could not or would not tell them what they wanted to know. He was tied, both eyes poked out, his throat cut and a bayonet run through his skull and then the

Japanese left again. The missionaries then sent their families to Bougainville to hide in the bush. About this time four Australians landed at Buka with radio equipment to report on the movement of Japanese shipping, and they stayed at the Methodist Mission. In March 1942 the Japanese returned to Buka in force, landing troops from seven cruisers and one destroyer. The Australians had started building an airfield which the Japanese completed. Mr. Sodutu had hoped to remain on the island and continue his missionary work, but felt he had to help the Australian observers escape from the island. He took them to Bougainville and then stayed there to work with the Australian intelligence officer as the Japanese had found out about his aiding their enemies. They would send native boys to work for the Japanese who would gather information about their number and plans. Mrs. Sodutu told of one native boy whom they discovered carrying food to the women and children. The Japs decided to burn him and gathered wood and benzene. Then took the native boy a short distance from the pile of wood and turned him loose telling him to run in the direction of the wood. Soldiers were standing around with rifles ready to shoot him as he ran. But he was near a twenty foot cliff and he jumped over this. Then he outwitted the Japanese by climbing back up the cliff and hiding in a hole covered by vines and creepers. That night he was able to reach the water and swim to freedom on another island about a mile away. As the Japanese brought more soldiers to the island they used less native labor and information became harder to get. In December of 1942 there were over 9500 Japanese soldiers in the Buin area and since that time little has been found out about their activity.

Living in the bush since March 1942 the Fijians have been moving from place to place as they would hear of Japanese approaching. They hid most of the time along the NW coast of the island as here the surf is rough which made it difficult for the Japanese to land searching parties in small boats. They obtained food from the natives and ate the wild fruits and roots. Occasionally an

American plane from Port Moresby would drop them food. These planes also brought arms and ammunition to the 26 Australian soldiers still on the island. Early in March of this year the women were notified that an American submarine would be at Tjop on which they could leave Bougainville on March 28th. They traveled over fifty miles crossing a 14,000 foot mountain in the next two weeks to reach the rendezvous area. Upon arrival they were dismayed to find a Japanese schooner in the harbor. However the schooner left on the 29th and the American submarine surfaced; it had arrived on the 28th to find the Japanese present, so had stayed submerged in the harbor. As the harbor was deep the submarine was able to get within 20 yards of the beach and the passengers were taken out to it in canoes under cover of darkness. There were twelve Australian men also leaving the island on the submarine.

The Chinese women and children came from the SE aspect of Bougainville and it is here that most of the Japanese forces have landed. The Japanese had visited the Chinese settlement several times and forced them to trade them pigs and chickens for dry Japanese food. The women were not molested by these first Japanese and had stayed in their homes. Later a different group of Japanese soldiers came and they caught the women and raped them. Mrs. Heeyou was assaulted by a group of over fifty soldiers and several abused Mrs. Pitts. Why they were not killed is not known, unless the Japanese hoped to return. Following this incident the Chinese women and children took to the bush and stayed there until they were notified to come to the rendezvous to be taken from Bougainville.

The three Catholic Sisters have been on the island about twenty-five years. They are French Nuns of the Marist Order. Sister Mary Adelberta and Sister Mary Martian were last stationed at Sivii. They left there on December 28, 1942 when they heard that the Japanese were approaching. Since that date they have been fleeing to escape capture, living in the bush and native huts when possible. They

wandered from one district to another until the latter part of March. At that time they met a party of four Australian soldiers who arranged for them to leave the island on the American submarine due March 28th. They were dismayed to see the Japanese at the rendezvous area, but these left after gathering some chickens and pigs and the Sisters were able to reach the submarine. Sister Mary Ignatius was last stationed at Turi Boiru in the Buin District. She left there on October 14, 1942. The Japanese had entered the convent earlier and carried off seven other nuns, leaving Sister Mary because of her advanced age. When the Japanese left the area the natives assisted her to the point of evacuation.

The party spent two days and two and a half nights on the submarine, which they say has sunk five Jap ships. When a few miles from Guadalcanal they were transferred to a sub chaser which took them ashore. They have been at an Army Field Hospital since that time.

The Sisters are deeply grateful for the hospitality given them since boarding the George Clymer. For the first time in months they feel free from fear of the Japs. As one of them said, "We are in the hands of friends again." They wished their gratitude to be conveyed to the Captain, the Executive Officer ("the Officer we met when we first came up the stairs.") and to Dr. Oliver.

Out of their poverty they bring the riches of their prayers that "God will bless your ship and take care of her men always."

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 21, 1943

0510—General Quarters.

0600—Mass.

The rest of the family is doing nicely except for one Chinese mother whose four out of six children as well as herself are seasick. They carefully avoid the Wardroom.

Rest of the youngsters are bouncing around on the Boat Deck Forward, having the time of their lives. A box of hard candy to each mother makes their happiness complete. As they enjoy their floating playground, they see off the port side two destroyers zigzagging back and forth to waylay any subs that may be lurking for us. We had two alarms yesterday, necessitating emergency turns. God grant that if we are to ship a torpedo, it happens on some other trip rather than this one. On the starboard side, they can see a big aircraft carrier sending its birds aloft to make sure the skies overhead are safe from the hawks that would wreck us.

THURSDAY, APRIL 22, 1943 Holy Thursday
0515—General Quarters.

0600—Mass.

At Mass a cosmopolitan group; three French Missionary Sisters receive Holy Communion. With them a Chinese mother and her youngster, a half caste and her son, nine years old.

At the end of Mass I say a few words: "This morning, men, we had a great privilege in being able to have Holy Mass. Not every priest can say Mass on this anniversary of the institution of the Holy Eucharist, but through a special concession granted to Chaplains in the Armed Forces, each priest is allowed to say Mass today."¹⁵⁶

"For another reason also, this Mass is an extraordinary one. Among our congregation are three Missionary Sisters of Mary and other passengers. Perhaps you may have heard of their harrowing

¹⁵⁶ Foley is referencing an "exception" granted during the war, permitting individual priests to celebrate Mass on Holy Thursday, when under normal circumstances only the Mass of the Lord's Supper would be celebrated. Other exceptions included eating meat on Fridays, celebrating Mass late in the day or in the evening, and the granting of "general absolution," or absolution of sins without first hearing confession. See entry for May 8, 1943.

experiences of the last few months. They have been walking in the footsteps of Our Lord, yes, literally stumbling as He stumbled on the road to Calvary. Their road has been a bloody one. You would never guess it from speaking with them, but the truth shines through their humility. Our ship is blessed in having them aboard. It is an honor to serve them and a privilege to carry them as passengers. They won't be with us much longer but they go their way attended by our prayers. We hope they will never be the innocent victims of a war as men wage it. And we ask God to bless and keep them always."

One little tyke was up long before the rest this morning. He has made a hit with everybody. He is about three years old and has an infectious smile that breaks every time you look at him. His name is Aloysius Chinyung. At table he stands up on his chair the better to wrestle with the chicken on the bone. He makes most efficient headway with intermissions, occasionally while he dries his hands on his shorts, made from a flour sack, all he is wearing, by the way. On the front of them are the surviving letters, on back the brand "Perry." He is a picture for Life as he puts away his chicken.

Rosary and Benediction at 3:30 P.M. on the Boat Deck Forward. First time musical voices of women have been heard aboard our ship. They join our men in singing of "O Salutaris" and "Tantum Ergo," known wherever the Church is by all her children.

This evening about 7:30 I get some ice cream for the Sisters. Running around the passageway and making friends with every sailor he meets is Aloysius Chinyung. I get him a box of ice cream also, dip the wooden spoon into it for him, feed it to him. He no sooner has it in his mouth than he takes it out in his hand and puts it back in the paper cup. The coldness of the ice cream was too much for him. About 20 sailors standing around joined in the laughter of Aloysius. We try again with a small soft dose this time. He tastes it gingerly, experiments, rolls it around his tongue for a moment, then he is converted, provided the spoonful isn't too big.

Ten minutes after we finish, a sailor, Grymen, Bo's'n's Mate, approached me with a bomb helmet full of bills and change. "Some things for the poor kids. Looks like they hit on hard times. Here's something to buy them shoes and clothes. That flour sack Aloysius is wearing is funny but it is tough, too. Boys thought you could give this to the Sisters who would know how to take care of it for the kids." Total: \$286.00.

FRIDAY, APRIL 23, 1943, GOOD FRIDAY

0600—Mass of the Presanctified and Adoration of the Cross.

My family present again. Six of them are seasick. They spend all the time in their staterooms lying down trying to forget their misery. The others are topside, enjoying sunshine and slowly regaining their shattered health. We drop anchor at 9:00 A.M. but passengers will not go ashore until tomorrow.

SATURDAY, APRIL 24, 1943, Holy Saturday

0600—Mass.

0900—The Captain shows me the order that he has received from shore:

(T27 V G01) Z OAF3 232231 T27 GR 89 BT
COMSERON SOPACFOR
USS GEORGE CLYMER
REFERENCE MYDIS 230521 X REQUEST YOU DISEMBARK
38 EVACUEES VIA SHIP'S BOAT WITH COMMISSIONED
OFFICER IN CHARGE AT SUCH TIME AS WILL PERMIT
BOAT WITH EVACUEES TO ARRIVE AT NAVY LANDING AT
1300 TODAY X REQUEST BOAT BE INSTRUCTED TO TAKE
COMMISSIONER OF POLICE AND HIS FINGER PRINT-
ING EQUIPMENT ABOARD AT NAVY LANDING AND
THEN PROCEED TO NOUVILLE ON ILE NOU AND LAND
COMMISSIONER AND EVACUEES X REQUEST YOU SEND
WITH GROUP A LIST OF NAMES OF EVACUEES AND ANY
OTHER AVAILABLE INFORMATION FOR DELIVERY TO
COMMISSIONER OF POLICE REF: (230521) UNFORSEEN
DIFFICULTIES HAVE DELAYED THIS EMBARKATION OF
38 EVACUEES DUE TO THE LACK OF PREPARATION OF
THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES X EXPECTED THAT THIS
EMBARKATION WILL TAKE PLACE APRIL 24

At 10 o'clock the Commissioner of Police of Noumea comes aboard. He and I discuss the status of the refugees. A man about 40 years old, quite conscious of his own importance, he briskly instructs me that Sister Martian and Sister Ignatius will be allowed to go to the local convent but Sister Adelberta will be confined in the local prison. The reason? She is an enemy alien since she is from Alsace-Lorraine originally. Quietly, I explain to him, that no matter what the law reads, she is no more an enemy alien than he or I are. He takes an adamant stand. Finally, when all efforts at gentle persuasion fail, I tell him that if one of the Sisters goes to the jail, the three of them go. He steps aside to talk with his aide and agrees that the three may go to the convent on one condition, that I will guarantee their good behavior. I agree; sharply adding with a gesture to our thirty odd ships anchored around us in the harbor, "And the U. S. Navy stands behind the guarantee." My opinion of this local functionaire was not improved when a priest chaplain based ashore, told of the incident later, informed me that the same Chief of Police had a substantial interest, not professional but financial, in the biggest house of prostitution in Noumea, catering exclusively to American service personnel.

At 1230 I start out for the shore with my family, all 38 of them, in boat LCP [Landing Craft Personnel]. Although it is a calm sea, before we proceeded very far, about 12 of them suffered with seasickness. We follow the instructions. At the Isle of Nou, where Pontoon Assembly Division we carried from Norfolk to Noumea is stationed, the mother and their children are placed in a house adjoining a hospital. Pictures of all of us are taken by Frank Wells [a Seabee photographer], who promises to let me have some the next time we are over. At 3:30 the Sisters and I start back for Noumea about a half hour's run where they are placed in the clinic run by their own Sisters, Missionary Sisters of Mary. At last their long journey is over and they are with their own again. Touching reunion as they are welcomed back to their own.

SUNDAY, APRIL 25, 1943, EASTER SUNDAY

0600–Mass.

0800–Mass aboard the battlewagon, the USS *Indiana*, with confessions beforehand. At Mass about 500 in attendance with about 178 Communion. Location, directly under the after turret, the middle 16" gun. Can't raise host to normal height for long rifle is directly overhead, stretching out over the heads of the parishioners in the first rows. Ample space. Inspiring sight as the men file up, row upon row, for Holy Communion.

These 16" guns fire a shell that weighs 2700 lbs., over a ton! Back to Clymer for General Service. Great consolation as I write home to realize that unless I were a Naval Chaplain there would be no Mass or other service for the men today. Easter would be drab indeed. Afternoon meet Frs. Daly and Malloy, who dedicated their new Chapel this morning.

MONDAY, APRIL 26, 1943

0600–Mass.

Mail begins to come in, and calls increase on the Chaplain. Bad news comes with good. One boy learns the sad news that his mother attempted to commit suicide. Another is notified that his wife is suing him for divorce; a third that his wife has run away and abandoned their three youngsters.

Visit Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny again.¹⁵⁷ No fresh vegetables this trip, so bring ashore a side of beef and a bag of sugar.

TUESDAY, APRIL 27, 1943

0600–Mass.

Visit the Nickel Works this morning while waiting for the boat to come in from the ship which is anchored about three miles out in the stream. Slave labor pushing hand cars loaded with smelted ore, shooting it down through a funnel at white hot heat. Javanese barefooted on all those cinders and coal, walking

¹⁵⁷ See entry for Tuesday, January 19, 1943

along the narrow gauge tracks. One comes along, sits down beside a friend; evidently he is on the next shift. French foreman appears, barks at him in French, clips him across the side of the head. Javanese meekly picks hat up off the ground, again a clip, a stoop; then the foreman goes his way. Indentured labor, i.e. out from Java for 5 years on contract, then back home with the pittance saved up.

Movie tonight; Gallant Lady.¹⁵⁸

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 28, 1943

0600–Mass.

Frank Wells, photographer of Pontoon Assembly Division, takes some pictures of me. Those taken last Saturday of my family, Sisters and mothers and children, came out excellently. Oh, to be able to send them home. Some day, yes, please God in the future.

THURSDAY, APRIL 29, 1943

Good pictures of me; send to my mother by airmail. Hope they get through; think she will like them. Ed's pictures also developed, those he took at Guadalcanal.

Movies each night while we are in port. "Major and the Minor," "Arsenic and Old Lace," "The Fleet's In," "Yankee Doodle Dandy."

Sign at Marine Triangle in center of Noumea where beer and ice cream are dispensed to enlisted men:

Truk	1849 miles
Auckland	998
San Francisco	5563
Tokyo	3837
New York	9936
Beer	39 feet

We swing around the buoy in busy Noumea Harbor until May 3, when we are underway for what we think is Guadalcanal again.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 5, 1943

0500–Mass.

0600–Mass; Fr. Tennyson, Chaplain of 4th Spec. CB's stevedores.

0700–Mass; Fr. Carroll, Chaplain of 390 Bomber Squadron.

Underway again at 1000 with two Liberty ships. Day is crisp one, like a clear October day back home. Blue sky overhead; line of horizon seems twice its usual distance away. Islands and hills on our port all clear cut in outline.

If we are headed north again to Guadalcanal, this climate will change rapidly. The hot, steaming jungles of Guadalcanal will shoot the temperatures way up again.

Ed will be surprised to see me so shortly, for I thought that our last meeting would be the last for quite some time. We were due for a Navy Yard overhaul. When and where we don't know.

Confess to a feeling of uneasiness this trip. We are practically dragging anchor. Two Liberty ships, ("Submarine Bait," the boys call them), are with us, reducing our speed to 11 knots an hour.¹⁵⁹ Our normal cruising speed is 17 knots when we are alone. Ahead of us are three APD's, attack personnel destroyers, little craft of old World War I vintage; don't look particularly formidable out there ahead of us. Rumor had that we are headed for Efate, the southernmost island of the New Hebrides.

I write to Mrs. Hastings, 720 Columbus Avenue, New York City:

Dear Mrs. Hastings:

Yesterday I received a copy of the New York Times, Sunday, March 28th issue, in which a list was published of the New York boys who

¹⁵⁸ 1933, British import. IMDB plot description: "Unwed mother gives up baby for adoption and hopes to get it back when adoptive mother dies."

¹⁵⁹ Some 2700 Liberty ships were built as merchant marine cargo vessels for the war. Constructed quickly and cheaply, they were underpowered and under-gunned, and highly vulnerable to enemy attack.

died at Fort Mehida, Port Lyautey, French Morocco. On that list was the name of your son, Michael. Please accept my sincere condolences on the occasion of your sad bereavement. If military reasons had not prevented me, I would have written to you sooner to extend my sympathy.

It so happened that as a Naval Chaplain I was in a position to know the circumstances of Michael's death. Thinking that knowledge of them may help to lighten the burden of your sorrow, I am writing to acquaint you with them.

On the morning of November 11, 1942, it was my priestly privilege to bless, and later to bury, the bodies of the first boys who died in the battle that raged for three days and three nights. I came upon Michael lying at the base of one of the coastal guns that had been shelling our ship heavily. He died taking it by storm. He gave his life that we might live. Because of his bravery, our ship and her men were not at the bottom two miles off shore.

About one o'clock in the afternoon of the same day, Michael was buried a short distance from the spot where he fell. It was a beautiful day, clear blue sky overhead and warm with sunshine. As I started the burial service, fifty of our soldiers flanked me on the left and fifty native Moroccans, prisoners of war, on the right, all of us facing Michael and his brave comrades. When the order was given, the entire group snapped to attention. I read the prayers for the dead, taps were sounded and the last blessing given.

Michael is buried on the crest of the high hill next to Fort Mehida that looks out over the broad reaches of the Atlantic toward

country, home, and those near and dear to him for whom he gave the last measure of devotion. God, I am sure, has been mindful of his sacrifice.

May these details of the death and burial of your boy help to console you in your loss. You have my heartfelt sympathy and assurances that Michael will have a constant remembrance in my daily Mass.

Sincerely yours,

John P. Foley, S.J.
Chaplain, USNR"

THURSDAY, MAY 6, 1943

Routine at sea. Catching up on my mail; have a lot of it to answer before we hit port again.

Started day as usual with General Quarters followed by three Masses. Three o'clock Rosary and Benediction on the Upper Deck Aft; excellent attendance. Offer them up for two intentions, folks back home and God's continued protection over us in these submarine-infested waters.

Confessions in the evening for First Friday tomorrow.

My mother and sister write that my letter to Bishop [Richard] Cushing appeared in *The Pilot*. Glad he was pleased with it.¹⁶⁰

FRIDAY, MAY 7, 1943

0445—Mass, Fr. Foley

0600—Mass, Fr. Tennyson

0700—Mass, Fr. Carroll

Learn that our destination is the southernmost island of the New Hebrides group, Efate. On all our other trips we have steamed by this island wonder-

¹⁶⁰ The editors were unable to find a letter in the *Boston Pilot*, which was published by the Archdiocese, signed with Foley's name. Foley was likely referencing an unsigned article that appeared in the *Pilot* early in 1943, calling for financial contributions to missionaries in the South Pacific.

ing if there were any inhabitants aboard her. Now we shall see at close range.

Rosary and Benediction at three o'clock this afternoon, as we are passing through a narrow channel preparatory to anchoring. Fr. Tennyson has an organ that makes melodious music as we sing the hymns, the "O Salutaris" and the "Tantum Ergo".

When we finish we take a look at the country. On our starboard is a lovely island, which is Efate. Its hills are not very high and on the sides of them are fields that look like good grazing spots for cows and goats. The weather overhead is cloudy with mist rising from the heads of the hills. With a pair of glasses we can make out on the shore a number of Army tents beside two native huts of bamboo. Off to the port side are three small islands with very high mountains on them; in fact, the islands are the mountains. As usual, there seems to be no life on them, but Protestant Chaplain Bartholomew, whom we just took aboard, tells us that the natives are numerous there. When he arrived a year ago, he was the only chaplain in these parts with 8,000 men to take care of. He found the French Missionary Fathers a Godsend for the Catholic men while he took care of his own flock.

Here in Undine Bay we are alone, for the two Liberty ships left us at noon today. Everybody happy to see them go, at their speed of 11 knots, to which we had to reduce ours. After leaving them we proceeded immediately to shoot up to our speed of 17 knots; one destroyer, our escort.

SATURDAY, MAY 8, 1943

0500—Mass

0600—Mass, Fr. Tennyson. I remind the men that tomorrow is Mother's Day. Best possible gift is to offer up Mass and Communion for her.

0700—Mass, Fr. Carroll

0805—Chaplain Bartholomew and Fr. Tennyson in my room. I leave after a few minutes to carry out a request of one of them. Go down to the Quarter deck, starboard side aft to see Captain Shull. On way back go up ladder to Upper Deck Aft. Suddenly a rush of passengers and sailors to the port side. Overhead a P-40 Army fighter is flying over us. Half a mile astern is a blazing fire on the water. Another P-40 with the one that just flew over us was dipping over the destroyer. An Army Flying Major who was watching informs us it came down too close to the surface, wing touched, then plane end over tea kettle, now down at the bottom. Happened just a minute ago. No sign of plane or pilot. Smoke billows up from the deep; gas tank evidently broken feeding the fire on the surface like a lamp. I give the dying or dead boy absolution. "Ego te absolve ab omnibus censuris et peccatis in nomine Patris et Filii at Spiritus Sancti. Amen."¹⁶¹ Some time in the future, near or remote, a cold telegram will be delivered at a front door that will plunge a family into grief. The first intimation before the telegram arrives will be the stopping of letters from him. Fears will begin to arise, suspecting the worst and then the proof. May the Lord give that boy's good mother the strength to bear her cross and give eternal rest to his soul. Amen.

One of the Army flying officers just told me that the plane that crashed was doing what they call "buzzing" the destroyer, i.e. saying hello to her and stunting for her edification.

SUNDAY, MAY 9, 1943—Mother's Day

0500—Mass

0600—Mass, Fr. Fessenden

0900—Mass, Fr. Carroll

Large number of men receive Holy Communion in honor of their mothers. Day is windy and rainy. Benediction in the afternoon. After it is over, one of the men, Chief Donovan from Dorchester,

¹⁶¹ | absolve thee from all censures and sins, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Foley would have made the sign of the cross as he offered this general absolution.

remarks, “Didn’t it remind you, Father, of the Immaculate Conception Church, crowded with men, to hear the boys singing.?” Two hundred and fifty of them sang out the magnificent hymns of the “O Salutaris” and “Tantum Ergo.”¹⁶²

MONDAY, MAY 10, 1843

Monday starts as usual with three Masses after General Quarters.

It is the stormiest day we have had on the Pacific since we came through the Panama Canal on December 26, 1942. Driving rain, swollen clouds, sullen sea, mountainous waves, wild wind. Ship is rolling and pitching, making many of our passengers seasick.

About 9 o’clock, five ships pierce through the fog astern of us, three destroyers and two like ourselves, *Titania* and *Crescent City*. We slow down to enable them to catch up with us.

One destroyer, the *USS Stack*, cuts close across our stern. A veteran of *Midway* and *Coral Sea*, in which battles she distinguished herself.¹⁶³ Her bow goes under repeatedly as she steams along to take up her appointed station in the convoy. Deep under dips her nose and then she rears high out of the water while tons of foaming water cascade over her sides. Nobody topside on her. Everything, as on our ship, securely lashed to the decks.

During a lull in the storm *Fr. Carroll* and I go up just aft of the starboard wing of the bridge. Our signalmen are blinking the destroyer 1000 yards off our starboard side. Conversation is one-sided; only an occasional affirmative from the destroyer. A rain squall suddenly blots her out completely. Our topside decks

are covered with water that flows off as soon as it hits. Signalmen are dressed in foul weather clothing, short raincoats, rain trousers and hats. They are padding around in their bare feet. Fortunately this is not the Atlantic where besides being stormy, it is also cold. Our weather is summer temperature as it always is when we approach Guadalcanal.

In the afternoon get ready for Ed; peanuts, candy, cigars, matches, airmail stamps and stationery and hosts for *Fr. Flaherty*. Also have the pictures that Ed took some months ago. He will be pleased to see them.

Day continues to be blustery throughout with no letup until darkness when the wind dies down, the sea subsides, skies clear up with a few stars and ship only occasionally rolls and pitches.

TUESDAY, MAY 11, 1943

Three Masses as usual these mornings start the day after General Quarters. All hands are wearing helmets as we are in the zone where we were attacked on our trip one month ago. Day dawns bright and clear, a welcome change after the pounding of the sea and the rain and wind of yesterday.

About 7 o’clock we sight *Malaita*¹⁶⁴ on our starboard side. We have never been as late as this before. All morning we are approaching Guadalcanal.

One P.M. we drop anchor. I go over the side at *Koli Point* which is about 12 miles south of *Henderson Field*. Will I have the difficulty of transportation as last time we landed at this Point? Then it took me five hours to cover the distance. Ashore I learn that there has been a tropical rainstorm of two days which has wiped out the three bridges between here and *Henderson*. Nothing to do but to go back to

¹⁶² “The Immaculate,” as locals called it, was a Jesuit church in Boston’s South End neighborhood, and the home church for Boston College from its founding in 1863 until the college moved to a larger campus in 1913. The church closed in 2007.

¹⁶³ The *Stack* was part of a Task Group that on August 6-7 1943, in what became known as the Battle of Vella Gulf, sank three Japanese battle-ships and damaged a fourth without incurring a casualty. The ships were carrying Japanese soldiers to reinforce positions in the Solomon Islands. *Stack* would survive the war, ultimately earning 12 Battle Stars. It also survived two atomic bomb tests at *Bikini Atoll* in 1946 and was then decommissioned and sunk.

¹⁶⁴ A volcanic island northeast of Guadalcanal.

the ship after scouting around. A CB informs me that Carney Field is just two miles inland, built by the 36th Construction Battalion. [Capt. J.V.] Carney [USN], their Commander, an old flyer, wanted to be the first man to take a plane up off her and to put her down on the field. Took off nicely but crashed in the waters where we are anchored on this return trip. Overnight, we cruise around as usual to avoid being a sitting duck for submarines.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 12, 1943

In the morning we anchor at Kukum Beach. Fortunately Ed is only a few minutes away from there. At 8:30 ashore with two big boxes for Ed; apples and oranges in one and peanuts, chocolate bars, cigars, a big baked ham, air mail envelopes and stamps, matches, developed pictures, etc. in the other. Dr. Kirkpatrick with me.

Our boat heads into the beach where the Marines landed last August. Little surf, golden sand, coconut palms; birds singing overhead belie the days when men died by the hundreds on this beach and corpses floated from the 64 Jap ships and the 32 American that lie at the bottom of these waters, called "Steel Bottom Bay."¹⁶⁵

As we near the beach we brace ourselves for the sudden stop when the nose of the boat will ground. She does, we jump and are ashore once more. Dr. Kirkpatrick speaks to another Doctor. Arrangements are made to transfer the sick Army patients from our ship to Ed's hospital. We bum a ride to his outfit. Dr. Kirkpatrick all agog over evidence of the sanguinary struggle on every side. Coconut trees scarred by shot and shell, barbed wire entanglements, signs: "Mined Area," "Ammo Dump." Tops of coconuts shot away, standing headless among their more fortunate brothers. Black muddy roads until we hit the main stem built by the CB's.

In a few minutes we are shaking hands with Fr. Ed Flaherty and Ed and Moe Enderely. Ambulance is

quickly dispatched for the patients; the natives munch on the apples and candy, etc. Ed is wrapped up in the pictures that he took. Fr. Flaherty gives Dr. Kirkpatrick and myself pictures of his Cathedral decorated for Easter Sunday. Ed lent a helping hand to the floral decorations. Looks lovely among the coconut palms, fronds of which are profusely displayed everywhere. A couple of Marines pass by with their skin smeared with a brown solution. One of them remarks to me that he has a case of what the boys call "Guadalcanal Rot," a skin infection. While we wait, Dr. Kirkpatrick inspects a dugout that controlled the crossing of the Lunga at this particular point.

"Honk, honk." Our jeep, with Moe driving it, catches up with us and we are racing by Henderson Field. We note the tremendous number of planes visible in the distance. Directly on our left is a palm-concealed bomb-garden, where hundreds of bombs, 100 pounders; one, five hundred; and the big 1000 babies are lying around until lifted up by crane onto a truck, then to the belly of the planes that are off in the distance.

About 10:30 we arrive at Naval Operating Base. Owens goes looking for his brother. We meet Bishop Aubin, missionary of these islands who has seen hard times at the hands of the Japs. He is dressed in U.S. Army outfit, khaki trousers and shirt, open collar, wearing sun helmet and around his neck the Bishop's pectoral cross. He is a kindly faced man, about 65, I should say, white haired, with gentle eyes that mirror many experiences, a lot of which might not be forgotten for a long time, if ever. He speaks quietly, asking my name and ship. After a few minutes, Fr. Dwyer and a New Zealand chaplain come along also, and there are mutual introductions all around. The Bishop gives me his episcopal blessing as we part. I thank him. It is not often that one has the opportunity to be blessed by a saint in the flesh.

On our way, Moe, our chauffeur, drives us right up to Henderson Field. We see a hospital plane take off

¹⁶⁵ While Foley was right about losses over the long course of the Guadalcanal battle, the Marine landing on Kukum Beach on August 7-8 1942 was virtually unopposed, Japanese forces having withdrawn inland in the face of aerial and Naval bombardment prior to the landing.

for a southern point loaded with sick. One of these took off last November the same way; never heard of again. May have been shot down by a Jap plane.

Four-motored bombers, pursuit planes, P 38's and P 39's, the new Aircobras, are scattered all around the field. Some are coming in, others are taking off. Overhead, 21 Navy fighters and torpedo planes wheel by in formation. They may be the ones that climbed over our ship this morning. They took off from the field one by one, headed into the sun, made a turn after a mile, then grouped together information; a beautiful sight.

Lunga is a mad stream this morning, carrying down on its bosom all kinds of debris; trees, boards, coconuts, fronds of coconut palms, all swirling by, madly. This two day storm wiped out a 250 bed Army hospital.

We pass a bulldozer yanking out of the ground the stumps of coconut trees. The roots don't go very deep; they are stringy, swab-like, very tough. Step into the jungle; even the bright day is dim in it. You can see to the end of nothing. No matter which way you look, the dank matted growth, a green hell envelops you. Occasionally a butterfly flies by. It is gone and the jungle focuses attention on itself again.

Back at Fr. Flaherty's tent, Ed tells me that he heard we were in yesterday afternoon, went down to Lunga Point looking for us, but we were not in sight. Hence his greeting when I called out to the nearest soldier, "Know Ed Foley?" "It's about time," he yells.

Fr. Flaherty tells us that he is packing for New Caledonia where has been assigned. Hopes to get back to the States by rotation.

Since it is nearing 12 o'clock when we must be back to the ship per orders of the Captain. We say good-bye again and Moe drives Ed and the Dr. and myself down to the beach. In a jiffy Ed takes a picture of the ship, we are in the boat, underway and wave farewell till the next time. Aloha!

THURSDAY, MAY 13, 1943

Underway at 0400. We are convoy guide with USS Crescent City and Moracuron. Three destroyers screening us.¹⁶⁶

6:00—Aboard we have 200 Marines and the 147th Regiment, 2nd Battalion, whom we carried in early February. They are happy as the day is long to be aboard again. The day is a beautiful one, light fluffy clouds, blue sky behind them. Men are lighthearted around the decks, their worries left behind them on Guadalcanal [along with] buddies killed in action and accidents.

1230—Seated in the Wardroom when it came. Enemy bomber overhead, a four-motored Mitsubishi long range bomber. General Quarters; everybody to their battle stations. A loud whistle, then a roar as the bomb exploded off our port side. I am in the sick bay on the same side. Another explosion. Humphries, who has been a patient in the sick bay recuperating from a hernia, comes in from topside; the second bomb off the stern sprayed him with water. He is itching to get to his gun but he must obey the doctor's orders. Although we cannot see the turns, our ship is changing course violently, trying to get out of the way of the bombs. She heels over to port, to starboard, then back again, repeating the movement. I slip topside. One of the gunners tells me that the Jap bomber came directly over us from bow to stern, then withdrew into the sun; suddenly she comes in again on us. Our whistle is blowing emergency turns; destroyer is describing circles as she obeys the blasts. Now she boils past us at 35 knots, her forward guns blazing skyward. Another bomb drops; geysers all around us and Mitsubishi roars away unscathed.

Half an hour later, one of our planes flies into sight, hovers aloft over us, cruising round and round. About 0210 General Quarters are over and we are free again. Meanwhile I finish my Office for today. God's Providence and prayers back home protected us once again.

¹⁶⁶ The *Crescent City* was, like the *Clymer*, an attack transport. The editors can find no record of the *Moracuron*.

Our distance from Guadalcanal is approximately 300 miles, so Tojo came a long distance to drop his calling cards. At least an 800 mile trip for him. Radar caught him first 18 miles astern, then he swung ahead of us and came in straight. Afternoon passes quietly. At Rosary and Benediction I emphasize to the men that at all times like that this noon we are keenly aware of how intimately we depend on God. It strikes with overwhelming force. Yet the fact of our dependence as close is true at all times, not merely in moments of crisis. For two intentions we say Our Lady's Rosary and Benediction. 1. For the folks back home. 2. For God's protection. Rosary has an added meaning this afternoon.

General Quarters as per schedule this evening but no untoward event.

BEAUTY IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC

Sunrise—"Qui . . . splendore mane illuminas"
"You [Who]. . . with splendor the morning illuminates."

Stevenson, who died on British Samoa at Apia, describes Dawn as:
"That moment when the darkness trembles into light,
When the stars of heaven are extinguished like the street lamps of some human city.
When the whiteness brightens into silver,
The silver warms into gold,
The gold kindles into living flame, and
The face of the east is bared with elemental scarlet."¹⁶⁷

THE OCEAN

"Where breathless beauty lies blue-eyed,
Upon the noon-day sea."

Colors—Violent and intense
Sky is a blazing blue
Sands of shore are dazzling gold
Blue is the blue of the Pacific,
Beautiful almost to the point of pain.

FRIDAY, MAY 14, 1943

0500—General Quarters

0600—Mass

Day is a clear one with a brisk, cool wind that will help clear up a case of heat rash that I have. This tropical warmth, loaded with humidity and temperature crowding 90 degrees does make us men from a temperate clime really sweat. Just sit, doing nothing and the sweat rolls off us.

Afternoon about 2:30 we anchor at Espiritu Santo again to debark about 200 Marines. Approach as beautiful as ever. Little islands skirt the channel we are passing up. Serene blue sky for background, luxuriant green growth right down to the water's edge, golden wave-washed sand, light blue water close to shore at this quiet little spot and then the deep Pacific blue. Off to our port side where the wind is whipping into the shore of a small island, combers fringe the shore with a necklace of white in perpetual motion. Signalmen are blinking the shore to find out our berthing space. We coast in slowly over the grave of USS Coolidge and are soon at anchor after what has been a short trip in time.¹⁶⁸
Two days from Guadalcanal but long in experience; nobody will forget that bombing for a long time.

SATURDAY, MAY 15, 1943

Quiet morning; starts not with General Quarters but with Mass. In port we are free of all drills. This "port" is nothing but a channel between two islands. Presently there are at least 50 ships anchored here; fighting ships, dry floating dry docks, destroyer, cargo ships, combat transports, sub chasers, mine sweepers, etc.

1000—Underway for Samoa. This trip should be fairly uneventful after the excitement of the last few days. Saturday goes off without incident. Rosary and Benediction in the afternoon.

¹⁶⁷ From Robert Louis Stevenson's novel *The Black Arrow: Prince Otto* (1902). The passage was written as prose.

¹⁶⁸ See entry for January 30, 1943.

SUNDAY, MAY 16, 1943

0445–General Quarters

0600 and 0900–Mass

Strong headwind today, cuts our speed down to about 13 knots, trying to keep USS Moracuron, last of the three ships, with us. She has trouble staying up with us. Finally she is given the word that she is on her own with a destroyer as escort. We open up to 17 knots an hour; should be at Samoa in about three days. This trip from Espiritu is about 1200 miles, that much nearer home! Home. It will be a long time before we see it again, at least a couple of years, although we don't like to think the date of our trip east is that far away.

Off in the distance we see a large island, about three miles off our port side. Protecting her shores are coral reefs that stretch for miles in front of her. The surf is booming across them, judging from the spray that is being tossed high in the air by the long combers breaking over them. Here as all along our course that is studded with islands, the waters "Are at their priest-like task of ablution round the earth's shores."¹⁶⁹

General Quarters at 1000. Unidentified plane on the horizon astern of us 30 miles away. Apparently shadowing us. Climbs high out of contact, then contact is reestablished after ten minutes. Thirty minutes later she veers off to the east and then we are alone.

Day is clear with a bracing wind blowing. I read my Office up on the flying bridge, letting the sun dry out the heat rash that broke out the other day on my back.

MONDAY, MAY 17, 1943

We lost an hour yesterday as we headed east.

0600–Memorial Mass for one of the 147th Infantry who learned just before he came aboard that his mother had died in April. Another clear, bracing day, with mild temperature.

About 5:30 P.M. General Quarters. Submarine contact at 1600 yards off our starboard side.

Destroyer races over. Sends message to our Captain who is the Convoy Captain, "Think I'll drop an embarrassing particle." Two depth charges send geysers of water boiling into the sky, then cascading down from their peak like a fountain. Angrily the destroyer steams around the spot, hovering for the kill if the submarine should be forced to surface.

General Quarters over about 7:30 P.M.

In Chief Engineer's room when Mr. Mills, Lt. (j.g.) comes in and tells us that about 8 o'clock unidentified craft ahead was scouted by destroyer. Communication over TBS radio telephone must always be in clear but unintelligible language for the Japs. E.g., "Guess I'll go to the outfield." "She bats in the same league with us." "Guess I'll go back to the infield." Translated: "Going ahead to inspect and challenge this newcomer." "She is one of our own." "Returning to my position again."

Mr. Mills remarks that Jap submarines are now active in these waters. Night before last they sank a cargo ship just outside of Suva, Fiji Islands. We are passing north of them now.

TUESDAY, MAY 18, 1943

0500–General Quarters

0600–Mass

Day is a bright clear one. Men are recovering their pep and energy now that Guadalcanal is a good 1200 miles northwest of us. Eddie Rickenbacker called it "A hell-hole of mud and corruption." He was right. The boys who haven't picked up malaria have a skin infection of some kind. Others have yellow jaundice, kidney trouble, rheumatism and what not. One of them told me today that their first night

¹⁶⁹ A mildly misremembered line from John Keats's "Bright star, would I were steadfast as thou art." The original reads "The moving waters at their priest like task / Of pure ablution round earth's human shores."

ashore when we carried them last February was spent in a marsh.¹⁷⁰

One of the soldiers aboard us claimed that he could do something that he saw sailors doing. He had seen them washing swobs [mops] by hitching their handles to a line and then swinging them over the side. The threshing and thrashing they get from the ocean while the ship is underway soon purges them of all their deck grease, dirt, etc. The soldier got a bright light. “Water, line, khaki pants.” It looked so easy; no soap, no scrubbing. A minute later water, line, no pants. They were filed away in Davey Jones’ locker. That boy took a ribbing from the sailors and from his buddies about the knots that he didn’t know how to hitch. He presented himself to me girt in his loin cloth. I managed to rustle up a pair of our dungarees for him. The incident is one of the lighter ones that help to relieve the grimmer episodes of our life. One of the Catholic officers informs me that the Catholic boy is a good fighter under any conditions, but when a priest is by his side, he is superb. This officer was an Army Captain whose outfit saw bloody fighting on Guadalcanal.

5:30 P.M.—“Darken Ship.” “No smoking on the weather decks.” “No white clothing to be worn topside.” “Pipe down [stow below] all scrubbed bedding.” Such is the word that goes down every night at sea. Then immediately after that we have General Quarters at night.

Crossed the International Dateline.
0445—General Quarters

0600—Mass. Splendid attendance as usual by 147th Infantry. I commend them on their loyalty to their faith.

At the end of Mass we notice that there is land off our starboard side. We are steaming by Savaii, the west-

ernmost island of the Western Samoan Group which belongs to England. Long, low-lying mountains, lit up in bright purple by the rising sun, sunrise made in heaven. In the distance, Upolu, our destination. We are about two hours away from it. Apia is the town on our northern side where we will unload our cargo by our own boats and debark our troops.

0800—We are now much closer; make out deep purple backdrop of forest clad mountains not touched by the sun. In the foreground, the ever fresh tropical green of the trees, the palm fringed shoreline. Directly ahead of us is one high hill that is separated from the rest. It is close down by the waterfront. Directly in front of this hill is a twin-steepled church of white, obviously Catholic, with the long building beside it that may be a school. Along the shoreline are white-fronted houses with red and green tiled roofs, the whole a symphony of color. An artist would be in heaven here.

As we get closer and closer, see a beautiful waterfall cascading down the mountains. Near this, Ens. Littlejohn, who was on duty here for two years, tells me that Robert Louis Stevenson is buried here.¹⁷¹

At one o’clock I go ashore, blessing as usual the land as I step on it. Wander down the street fronting the shore, find all the stores closed, the siesta hour.

To the Church where I say a prayer for my parents and everybody back home and Ed on Guadalcanal. Church is big one, cruciform, with seats and kneelers only along the sides. Two-thirds of the space in the center is covered with mats for the natives to squat on. Altar is a beautiful piece of marble work. Our Lady’s “M” in blue hangs high over the middle of it and her lovely blue color dominates the sanctuary walls.

Onto the post office to buy some stamps for Lt. Cmdr. Oleson who is collecting them for his little girl back

¹⁷⁰ Edward Rickenbacker (1890–1973) was a WWI flying ace with 26 aerial victories, and a Medal of Honor recipient. On a government mission in October 1943, Rickenbacker’s plane crashed into the sea in the central Pacific. He and other survivors spent three weeks on life rafts before being rescued in the Solomon Islands.

¹⁷¹ An inveterate peripatetic, the much beloved Scots author spent the last three years of his life on the Samoan island of Opolu. He died in 1894, at age 44, and is buried atop a mountain at a site that offers views of the sea.

home. Politely told that no stamps are sold to American military personnel. Outside to say hello to a couple of Marines who have been on duty for 10 months here. Tell them of my predicament. They take me to a general store now open to meet Mr. McKenzie, the proprietor. Informed of my wishes, he sends out one of his Samoan girls, who comes back with the stamps for me. Mr. McKenzie used to sing in the choir of St. Ignatius Church in San Francisco before the earthquake. He is a kindly-faced, white-haired man of about 75, owner of this store. Wants to take me to meet the priests in the rectory but I must hurry back to the ship.

On the way back, pass Marist school run by the Brothers. Meet Brother Christopher who tells me, in answer to a question, that he was out here before I was born, 40 years. He is Swiss, his vigor of speech belying his years. Tells me that first the Germans ruled them, then the English, and now the Americans. We say goodbye and he marches away with a spring in his step that would do credit to a twenty year old boy.

No chance to see Robert Louis Stevenson's grave. It is six miles by automobile to the mountain on which he built his home and where he is buried, then a walk of six more on foot to reach his place. At 5 o'clock we are underway.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 19, 1943

0530—General Quarters

0600—Mass

We are underway alone with one destroyer as escort. The other is left behind to convoy the Crescent City tomorrow morning to American Samoa.

Even though it is dark, we can make out a line of mountains directly ahead of us. We seem to be passing through islands yet they aren't, for they are not broken. It is the mainland of each side.

As dawn breaks, we find that we are in a sheltered anchorage slowly cruising into Pago Pago. (Pronounced Pango Pango by the Samoans.) It is the American Naval Station. High mountains range on either side of us. We are apparently heading directly for land, then make a turn to our starboard, slow down to three or four knots, head in through the mine net and find that we are to anchor in a narrow "U". On either side, high mountains, enchantingly green, tower over us. They are covered with luxuriant tropical foliage. The day is a bit overcast. Clouds and cloudlets are sitting on the mountain tops that seem ready to fall on us, they are so close. Suddenly there is a burst of sunshine that makes the green come vibrantly alive. Ten minutes later it is over, and then the mountains start to steam. Same effect as dropping water on a hot stove.

Directly on our starboard is the first object we saw from a distance while out to sea, the Catholic Church painted white, a beautiful contrast against the luscious green of the mountain directly behind it. As usual, the immediate shoreline is fringed with coconut palms. The mountains drop away so sheerly that it is surprising to find a road skirting the water's edge. But jeeps scooting around it prove such to be the case. Half an hour goes by, another downpour.

1:30 P.M.—I go ashore with Glynn Jones, Congregational Chaplain, stationed here with the Marines, who met me on the ship a few minutes ago. Glad to see him for we were classmates together at the Chaplain's School in Norfolk. In jig time we are at Fr. Burns's, one of the Catholic Chaplains stationed here. A bottle of beer with him, we toast the day of our return to the States. We borrow his jeep for a run around town, visit the Church where I say a prayer for all the family. We bump into Fr. Frothingham, New Zealand missionary, who is pastor of the Church. We exchange greetings on the road. On the way we pass many native "falas," their term for their homes. They are circular, thatched-roofed affairs with open sides. Everything in them is wide open to the gaze of the passerby, with mats that fall down when privacy is desired.

The natives are big and muscular, like the Fijians, and like all South Seas Islanders, they are easy marks for colors. The women are dressed in the colors of the rainbow, not loud but beautifully blended combinations. The outside dress reaches just below the knees and the under dress, petticoat, to the ankles. Shoes are strangers to them. They are copper-skinned with no Negro features at all. The men wear skirts, with blouses. Some of them, however, are American in their dress.

We buzz around the shore while the mountains tower over us. Up we climb on the north side of the little harbor to the fall of Chaplain Jones. The dense tropical growth on both sides of the makeshift road is loud with songs of native birds. A ten minute ride and I am in the tent of the Marine Chaplain, right where Fr. Frank Sullivan, S.J. of Boston College was quartered until he was evacuated home for a bad heart.¹⁷² Captains Woodworth and Aplington and all the other officers I meet are loud in their praises of Fr. Frank. Missed him sorely when he left.

We are sitting in a screened tent with a board floor raised about three feet off the ground on the side of the mountain. Suddenly another tropical downpour and the water in a few minutes is cascading right under us. All over in a few minutes. Outside, palm trees shelter us and every inch of ground is covered with a rich green growth.

There are vines and short plants that look like the wild rhubarb back home, but have big rubbery leaves. Vines twisting round and round and round the trunks of trees. After a pleasant evening at the Officers' Mess, we start back to the ship in an open jeep. As we begin the ride down the side of the mountain, the rain is coming down in torrents. This is the daddy of the rainstorms, six of them today. It is pitch dark as we roar down. How Jones is able

to see, let alone drive, mystifies me. I can't even keep my eyes open in the driving rain and I have difficulty getting my breath. Within three minutes, raincoat, shirt, pants, shoes, everything on me is dripping. "How do you like it?" asks Jones. "I'll never forget it; I'm drenched through from stem to stern!" I shout through the rain. He shrieks that they have been here for eight months practicing jungle warfare in this weather. This place has 300 inches of rain a year. Back home the average rainfall is 30 inches a year.

We arrive at the dock where the Marines are loading the ship. Lakes of water all around us. How these American boys can take it! They are struggling under the heavy bags that they must carry aboard by hand. On top of that they are soaked through and through. Yet they slosh through the mud and rain and occasionally fall down under their burdens, but not a growl out of them. They are a magnificent crowd.

Jones informs me that they have been on jungle maneuvers for the last eight months. They are razor-edge for combat. Three divisions of Marines out here, about 50,000 of them. Means that our ship is to go into battle again before long. Six weeks is the guess of Jones. Mine is about three months or perhaps four. Never have to worry about winter coming to this part of the world to cancel operations. It is the land of the always summer. My, how a good breath of cold, sharp air would taste now.

Movie tonight for officers only. Random Harvest.¹⁷³

THURSDAY, MAY 20, 1943

No General Quarters this morning. Didn't have to put away the emergency abandon ship outfit that I lay out every night; heavy underwear, jar of Vaseline, pair of sun glasses, sweat shirt and white hat. As an amateur, I think those articles would be

¹⁷² Sullivan went on to serve as head of a school for military chaplains at the College of William and Mary and then as a chaplain in London until 1946.

¹⁷³ A 1942 Oscar-nominated film from Loews about a WWI American soldier who loses his memory as a result of shellshock and goes on to live a new life in France.

most useful if I have to hang on to a plank or squat in a life raft. Survivors report that they cooked by day and froze by night.

Ashore at 9 o'clock to return the movie and pick up movie, *Seven Day Leave*, with Lucille Ball.¹⁷⁴ Also beg a 35mm slide projector from Col. Peard of the Marines. Welcome addition to our ship.

Today, rain, steady downpour only, not intermittent showers of yesterday. I thumb a ride to the other side of this U-shaped harbor where I visit the Church, Catholic, as they always are in these far-off places of the world.

It is a lovely place, the Church of blue, white and gold inside. The walls are painted white with a band of blue halfway up the walls. Gold is the trimming, circles around the windows up in the clerestory that keeps out the rain that is pouring from the clouds. Directly behind the Church is the mountain called by the Samoans "The Rainmaker." Clouds, we can see tumbling over it, are pierced by his high head and then they spill their rain.

In the Church the statues of Our Lady, St. Joseph, the Little Flower and the Sacred Heart make the visitor from across the seas feel perfectly at home. I make the Stations of the Cross for my father, head out into the driving rain again, down the U, and stop at the school run by the Marist Sisters. This is one for the boys and girls who cannot speak English or who have a little difficulty with it. I say a few words to them, ask for prayers for my ship and her men. Sister informs me that the English-speaking Samoan boys and girls are in a school down the road a bit. I tramp down, walk in and introduce myself to Sister Mary Florentine. She is from Lynn, Massachusetts, and also Sister Mary Isadore from Rigaud, Quebec, both SMSM.¹⁷⁵ I promise to write to their mothers, Mrs. James Joseph Powers,

170 South Common Street, Lynn and Mrs. Isadore Chevrien, Rigaud, Quebec.

The boys and girls from six to fourteen are playing around the yard. They are called to attention by a bell which is the signal for them to recite the [Easter Hymn] "Regina Coeli laetare, alleluia, quia quem meruisti portare, alleluia, resurrexit sicut dixit, alleluia."¹⁷⁶

In they file. Sister Mary Isadore introduces me to 120 dark-skinned handsome youngsters and I tell them something about my ship, where we have been and what has happened to us. I tell them about the bombing last week and ask their prayers.

They sing in beautiful harmony the Samoan song, "Tofa me feline," "Goodbye my friend," and then Bishop [Richard] Cushing's composition of "Mother Dearest, Mother Fairest" for our soldiers, sailors and Marines. Music is in the blood of these young boys and girls as in that of all South Seas Islanders. Again I speak to them, tell them how much I have enjoyed it and give them my blessing. Before leaving, tell Sisters about Sisters Adelberta, Ignatius and Martian whom we carried aboard from Guadalcanal to Noumea. They were overjoyed to hear the good news of their arrival.

With "Goodbye, Father" ringing in my ears, I left them. The setting of the school? Right on the beach fringed with palm trees hanging over the water's edge. Lovely hydrangeas, roses growing in profusion, some of which decorated Our Lady's shrine in the little classroom that I just left behind. Directly behind the little school, the mountain rising straight up, covered with luxuriant tropical growth. Can see flamboyant tropical birds flying from one treetop to another. Crest of the mountain wrapped in clouds. My ship just about four minutes out on the water so that when I spoke of her I just pointed out of the windowless window.

¹⁷⁴ A light romantic comedy from RKO, 1942.

¹⁷⁵ Missionary Sisters of the Society of Mary

¹⁷⁶ A Marian hymn dating to the 17th century. "O Queen of heaven rejoice! alleluia: For He whom thou didst merit to bear, alleluia, Hath arisen as he said, alleluia."

Another unforgettable experience hearing the lilting melody of the Samoan song and the lovely verses of Bishop Cushing's. And one more yet unmentioned, how Sister Mary Florentine's blue Irish eyes trickled a tear when she learned that I was [raised] so close to her home. She told me that she was the last white person allowed to enter Samoa from the outside, that was three years ago. Sister Mary Isadore has been here for 11 years. Both were here a year ago in January, 1942, when the Jap submarine lobbed shells over these hills from the other side of the island, which is only three miles wide here, into this landlocked harbor. Nobody was hurt, fortunately.

FRIDAY, MAY 21, 1943

0600–Mass

Day dawns the same as the previous two, with intermittent showers in the morning. Off in the distance on the port side can see a little car pulled up to the steep side of the mountain on a cable. Three Marines in it. They are on their way to their gun emplacement which is completely disguised with the green growth all around. This harbor was once the pit of an active volcano. The high mountains all around us were the lava tossed up by the volcano in its angry moods. Here and there where gashes have been made in the sides for the road that runs along the palm-fringed shore reveal hard rock that was molten fire.

At 2:13 I thumb my way out to the airport ten miles outside Pago Pago. We are driving right along the shore. Many sharp turns in the road, with the mountains towering right over us. On very sharp turns we can't see what is on the other side until we get around them. Road surface built by CB's is of hard, white coral dug out of the sea that is thundering in a few feet away, is dried out by the sun, when it shines, and then put to work affording a hard top for our jeeps, trucks, ambulances, etc.

At the airport the normal signs of activity. Some planes are warming up preparatory to going out on patrol, others circling around in the sun-drenched sky waiting to land from their work out to sea. Still

more are being serviced on the long runway, 6000 feet that ends right on the ocean edge.

Sunlight this afternoon for about half an hour. Sunset is a striking one. Right hand side of the mountains behind which it is setting is a deep dark green; left hand side of those on the other side of the shaped harbor is slashed in vivid green patches by the bars of sunlight slipping through the clouds. The Rainmaker, directly on our left, has his head in the clouds as usual, tickling them until they spill their moisture. As soon as it lands, up it rises again from the hot, steaming earth and he has more clouds to play with.

I buy a circular tappa cloth made by a native woman, from the bark of a tree. The design is laboriously worked into the material by hand. Is a lovely reminder of Pango Pango. There I go spelling it as it is pronounced, not as it should be, Pago Pago.

SATURDAY, MAY 22, 1943

0600–Mass.

Meet Protestant Chaplain Justice who wants me to go aboard the Crescent City for Mass tomorrow for his Catholics. Learn that we'll be underway early so those boys will have no Sunday Mass.

SUNDAY, MAY 23, 1943

Mass at 0600 and 0900.

Protestant Service conducted by my Chaplains' School classmate, Glyn Jones, Baptist USMC, at 1000. Fine fellow, about 29, who would be a Catholic if he were not married and the proud father of a little girl two months old, whom he has never seen. Glad to have him aboard.

About 0800 we are underway to Auckland, so scuttlebutt has it. Good old New Zealand. We will be glad to see that again after our months in the hot tropical seas and islands. We want to see the frost on our breath once more and snow on the mountain tops.

This morning we saw a sunrise for the first time since we anchored on Wednesday. Setting is the reverse of

the sunset on Friday. Now the mountains here on our right are barred with slashes of sunlight. However, old Rainmaker salutes us with a parting shower as we leave. It rains just a short distance from him while the rest of the harbor escapes the sudden downpour.

Last night we had a movie, *Pardon My Sarong*, with Abbott and Costello. The tropical paradise of the screen was just a faint approximation of the reality. Like “Pago Pago,” with Dorothy Lamour, the scenario writers are miles away from the truth, both pictorial and human, in their script.¹⁷⁷

One of the Marines points out the Rainmaker to me. He says that Fr. Sullivan climbed up that on Sunday, straight up the steep face of it, with no road whatsoever, to celebrate Mass for his Marines who were stationed there on a maneuver. No wonder Fr. Frank Sullivan of B.C. is home with an enlarged heart.

Rainmaker is a sharply tipped mountain peak, the next to the highest one around the harbor that has clouds on top of it when the others have none. The rain always started with him. Sometimes, as the other day when I was walking along the main street, sheets of rain were backgrounded against Rainmaker, coming across the harbor, but before they travelled one mile they had spent themselves, so we didn’t need the raincoats after all.

Ship scene at nightfall after darken ship. Two Marines singing in harmony “There’s a Star Spangled Banner Waving Somewhere.”¹⁷⁸

MONDAY, MAY 24, 1943

General Quarters as usual, at 0545, Mass at 0630. Very late means that we are headed for cool climate. We are used to General Quarters at 0445, not this late, but still it is pitch dark at 6 o’clock. Reminds us of home.

Our passengers are the 3rd Marines, men who are all set for anything the Japs may throw at them when they make their landing operation on ??????. One guess is as good as the next.

No mail for five weeks now. The sailors miss it. Morale is made up of the following factors: plenty of mail regularly, good chow and good liberty, and movies. And work!

TUESDAY, MAY 25, 1943

0545—General Quarters

0630—Mass These Marines are splendid Catholic fellows, their average age being about 19. They are attending Mass daily in large numbers and many of them receive Holy Communion. They are present also for Our Lady’s Rosary and Benediction in the afternoon at 3 o’clock on the Upper Deck Forward.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 26, 1943

No General Quarters! Remarkable event, for this marks the first morning in months at sea that we have not risen one hour before dawn to man our battle stations.

0630—Mass

Mr. Mills, Lt. (j.g.) tells me later that we almost had G. Q. this morning, for a sub contact was made at 0600 and two depth charges were dropped on Tojo’s steel cigar.

Day is delightfully cool. We feel it bracing after the enervating heat of these last few months when just sitting doing nothing was no cure for perspiration rolling off us. But we plugged ahead, working as though the temperature were about 70 instead of 100. Now instead of the hot burning sun overhead, diffusing a warm glow over the surface of the ocean, the sunlight is a clear, blinding light where it hits

¹⁷⁷ “Pardon My Sarong” (Universal, 1942) is a comedy featuring Bud Abbot and Lou Costello as urban bus drivers who flee gangsters by driving onto a ship and are then transported in their vehicle to a tropical island. And Foley seems to be referring to the 1939 movie *Hurricane*, which stars Lamour—queen of the sarong films—and was filmed on the island of Bora Bora in French Polynesia.

¹⁷⁸ A hit song for a short time in 1942, it celebrates an American Valhalla, where the flag is “Waving o’er . . . heroes brave and true” including George Washington, Nathan Hale, and George Armstrong Custer.

the sea. Even the rays of the sun are cool now, like one of those crisp, bracing October days back home, that are now only a memory.

Beal, 1st Division, fell today on the way up to the Crow's Nest. Ship lurched as he was going up hand over hand, fell backwards about 20 feet; fortunately just a three stitch wound in the head and a bruised right leg. Fell on another man whose lips are puffed and teeth loosened. Beal badly frightened.

FRIDAY, MAY 28, 1943

One o'clock in the morning, I am all but rolled out of my bunk. Ship starts to roll and pitch violently. We have hit right into a storm. Outside can see nothing, for it is a black night and the rain clouds are spilling their loads. Everything on my desk: vigil lights, clock, desk blotter, three books, ash tray, small crucifix lands on the deck with a crash. Noises all over the ship as whatever is not securely lashed down hits the deck. To bed after arranging the goods on the deck. No use putting them on the desk again; they will promptly be on the deck in a hurry. Unanchored chairs are slithering around the room and protesting in squeaky tones at the unusual treatment.

Back to bed. Up again at three when something else gives. One of the drawers in the desk shot out and the bottle of ink high up on my wash stand found a resting place with the other gear on the deck. Why it didn't break when it fell five feet I know not.

Back to bed but up again, unable to sleep as I roll from one side to the other. Oh, my aching back!

Reveille at 0545. Whole ship is up anyway, so bugler is just exercising his lungs.

Mass at 0630 topside. One Marine holds on to the right hand side of the altar with the left secured to the bulkhead. After Mass at which about 20 boys receive out of attendance of 120, look at the sea, a sullen creature this morning. Angrily raising itself to the full height of its snowy crests. Skies are gray and the surface of water is leaden.

Back on the fantail, waves rise high over the side when we slip down into the trough of the big fellows.

No breakfast this morning, just a ham sandwich to take the edge off our appetites. Cooks can't cook this morning. Fortunately I am not seasick as are so many.

One of the colored messmen is telling a Marine about the bombing of our ship on our last trip. He remarked that he lost his appetite not merely for that day, but for 24 hours.

SATURDAY, MAY 29, 1943

0545—Reveille

0600—Mass

Day is raw and blustery as it begins. Darkness still broods on the surface of the waters as late as 6:30. White caps still riding the crests and squally rain drives in.

0800—Landfall on our starboard side, jagged islands of rocks, New Zealand from the north. May be wild, but she looks good to us and the Marines. We are entering the 80 mile channel through the waters to Waitemata Harbor, meaning Shimmering Waters in Maori, the language of the natives of New Zealand.

After half an hour of steaming, huge mountains rear themselves up on both sides, no foliage clothing their nakedness. Their bare sides drop precipitously into the waters below, that are lashing their feet relentlessly, tirelessly. As yet no sign of habitation. This is wild country.

1200—Day clears into sharp, cold one, much like our late October, early November days. Wind is sweeping the bare headlands, seagulls are chasing our wake, rhythmically, turning their heads this way and that in quest of food.

2:15—Still making full speed ahead. Now it is a real football afternoon, cold clouds overhead through which the rays of the sun slant down. Rays only visible. No sun through the gray blanket that hides it from view.

5:30—At dusk we nose slowly into our berth, the last of the four ships. On the dock is a 24 piece New Zealand band to welcome us. Marines cheer themselves hoarse as the band breaks out the “Anchors Aweigh” and “Amapola.”¹⁷⁹ Their enthusiasm rents the skies when their own Marine Hymn “From the Halls of Montezuma” is played. Nothing is too good for this Third Regiment of Marines. They have been rotting in the jungles of Samoa for 8 months. A half hour ago when a train hove into sight, they pounded each other on the back as they called attention to the plume of white smoke.

6:00 – Ashore down Queen Street, main street of Auckland, which like our own [Boston’s] Washington St. or Times Square, N.Y. City, is blacked out. Bobby, alias a cop, tells me that stores close at noon on Saturday. Back to the other ships at the dock where I meet Fr. Kemper, Chaplains Reeves and Justice. Arrangements for Mass in the morning.

SUNDAY, MAY 30, 1943

0530—Confessions

0600—Mass

Walk over to Crescent City, our sister ship.

0730—Confessions in Dr. Cronin’s Dental Office.

0830—Mass in Officers’ Lounge. Back to George Clymer for Mass at 1015, followed by Benediction.

Ashore to have a good steak. Find that all restaurants and tea shops are closed on Sunday also. Visit St. Patrick’s Cathedral; tall stately columns, reminding me of the Cathedrals of England. Inside half a dozen men and women in the evening of life kneeling before Our Lord, and perhaps asking Him to stay with them now more than ever, for “it is toward

evening and the day is far spent,” as the disciples on the way to Emmaus expressed it.¹⁸⁰

Ride in a tram car to the top of Three Kings Mountain where a magnificent view of Auckland and its houses and tall buildings, with their people spread out before me.

In the evening with Fr. Kemper to the Cathedral again where we meet Fr. Curran, who brings us to the Catholic Service Club. There Bishop [James] Liston greets us and we exchange experiences over crumpets and a cup of tea before the open fireplace. Lord Mayor of Auckland, Mr. [James] Allum, graces the gathering after a few minutes and we have an enjoyable time for half an hour before breaking up.

Auckland Street Scenes:

- Elderly man seated in a doorway off the main street selling lottery tickets. Is muffled up against the chill air as he sits before his makeshift desk with his books of tickets. A kerosene lamp lights up the deep lines on his face as he leans over to complete a transaction with a customer who hopes that he is the lucky winner.
- In a doorway loiter two unfortunate girls, who are obviously catering to the “love that blights and sears.” They are waiting for the sailor boys and their money.
- Though it is May, all the leaves on the trees are changing from green to crimson and gold. It is the Fall of the year here.

MONDAY, MAY 31, 1943

0600—Mass. Ashore this morning to beg, borrow or steal a movie that we can take with us. Succeed through the generosity of Battman EM 1/c, who gives me “Singapore Lady” with Brenda Marshall.¹⁸¹ In the afternoon the streets are thronged with shoppers, much like Washington and Tremont Streets in

¹⁷⁹ A Latin song, often played as a rumba, that became a top-hit in a version by The Jimmy Dorsey Orchestra in 1941. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4ZppcSYxL2o>

¹⁸⁰ Luke 24:29

¹⁸¹ The movie, which was actually titled *Singapore Woman* (Warner, 1941), featured a heroine who, with the help of principled men, managed to correct her life course.

Boston. Day is clear, cold with a sharp blue sky and not a cloud across its face.

TUESDAY, JUNE 1, 1943

0600–Mass

0730–Underway. Day is sharp one with a weak white sunrise this morning. Clean cold mist rising from the waters of the harbor. We back out of our berth with the aid of a fussy tug, swing around and are underway again, regretting that we didn't stay long here at all to enjoy the Boston or the New York of New Zealand.

With us the Crescent City, Hunter Liggett, American Legion. Hunter Liggett breaks down and cuts down our distance to 80 miles for ten hours while she makes repairs. That delay means that instead of arriving tomorrow we will hit Wellington on Ascension Thursday.

1100–Guns have firing practice at a sleeve towed by a plane. The three inchers boom away while the 20mm chatter like old hens.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 2, 1943

0600–Mass

Ship is very quiet these days, like a house after visitors leave. Then walking around the deck, young soldiers and Marines are not having to pick themselves up out of the way of the ship's personnel. As I pass along the deserted starboard side of the Upper Deck, I recall that here under this Boat #4, on the way down from Samoa, two young Marines, with youthful voices were trying to harmonize "There's a Star Spangled Banner Waving Somewhere." As their voices floated out on the South Pacific evening air, it came home to me that the boys like those two were the reason why the flag was flying in the strangest places on the face of the earth.

Spend the day making out insurance policies. In the evening classical music is in the air in the Mess Hall. Mitchell, BM 1/c and Snyder, Marine Sgt. are playing a duet, piano and violin respectively. Song, a waltz in A Flat by Brahms.¹⁸²

Hunter Liggett breaks down. What a barge! She falls behind for about five miles. Soon repairs damage and rejoins us.

THURSDAY, JUNE 3, 1943, Ascension Thursday

0600–Mass

We have slid all the way down the east coast of New Zealand. Weather, quite blustery. Seagulls keeping us company all the way. Ship is as quiet as a morgue since we debarked all our passengers in Auckland.

0900–Wellington once again. From here I sent our mother the first cable about Ed and myself.

Sight of it is just as thrilling as the first time. Steep mountains all about the harbor, not bare but covered for the most part with lovely homes. They are riding right up the sides into the clouds. Shore; onto a tram with a conductorette. Jam-packed. Instead of saying "Step forward in the car, please," she pleads, "Come on now, give the others a bit of a go, too."

Into a tea shop where I demolish a triple-decker whipped cream pie with a couple of cups of tea.

Good to see the city again. How I wish Ed could come down here for a change of scenery instead of sweating on malaria-infested Guadalcanal.

FRIDAY, JUNE 4, 1943

In the afternoon I accompany Chaplain Bill Lumkin¹⁸³ as he makes a number of calls on Marines at various outlying camps. Maori names are quite musical, e.g., Papatoetoe, Kiki Wawa. Why

¹⁸² As part of his duties as chaplain, Foley was assigned to prepare life insurance policies for military personnel. The Brahms Waltz in A-Flat Major, Op. 39 No. 15, is a brief well-known encore piece written for piano.

¹⁸³ William W. Lumpkin (1910–1969) was an Episcopalian priest from Charleston, South Carolina.

the duplication of syllable? As we start out here we skirt the shore of the bay, suddenly turn in, make a hairpin turn, three more of them and we are three quarters up the side of the mountain where the Marines have pitched their tents. While business is being transacted, I look down on the harbor, a beautiful sight as it spreads itself out before us. Blue sky with lazy white clouds drifting across them, white houses standing out against the brown of the hills and mountains, the high modern skyscrapers in the business section of the town, the little bugs moving, which we know are men and women, larger objects, slow moving — the trams and autos. A picture that frames itself in our memory.

Out to Hutt, an old race track, whose enclosure is now peopled with our boys, Marines who survived the Guadalcanal campaign.

As we ride along with the mountains as a backdrop, I ask, “What’s behind those hills?” “You’ll see shortly.” And we did. We started climbing and then hit a gorge behind the first foothill and rode down it between two high mountains. We twisted right and left with that gorge for about ten miles. On the sides of the mountains were dirty white blobs, the sheep munching away on the grass. The weather here is now supposed to be winter. It was summer when we were here in January. This day is a bit on the raw, damp side with clouds scudding down the sky. Here as we ride along are clusters of houses, parked along the side of the railroad that twists between the gorge like ourselves. The road is a splendid one, hard macadamized surface with a line of shrubs dividing the two lanes. On our left we pass a native Maori communal house where they hold their tribe meetings. It has a huge, wild-looking figure carved at the top of the intersection of the roof beams. Maori boys and girls are romping around, chasing each other as do youngsters all over the world. Some of the girls are playing hopscotch, a universal game for girls. We slow down before what was a golf clubhouse, are

ushered into the presence of Col. Laue, who was a splendid host, made us share and share and share his hospitality. Sat down and chatted with him for a while before we began our return trip. Stepped out onto the porch of the clubhouse and received a shock. Thought we were inland but the sun is setting in an old rose sky over the waters.

The little harbor, semicircular in shape, is guarded by two pillars of Hercules. A sublime peace and quietness broods over the entire scene. Then from the sublime to the ridiculous, a piglet is honking at our feet. “Our pet,” remarked the Colonel. “When we find an apple, no more piglet.” “Goodbye” to a perfect host.

SATURDAY, JUNE 5, 1943

0600–Mass

At noon I go over to the Hunter Liggett where I have lunch and then hear confessions of the men aboard her. Back to the Clymer.

In my room at 1645 (4:45 P.M.) when a knock informs me that two men from the Seamen’s Institute are awaiting the pleasure of my presence there. Ten minutes later Fr. Noel Gascoigne introduces himself. He is the chaplain for the ships that come in who have no Catholic priest aboard. He is attached to the Cathedral. Seamen’s Institute is at 11 Vivian Street.

Father was educated in Rome, then won his master’s degree in education at Oxford. He is a big man, dark-complexioned with keen, alert eyes, a pleasant smile lighting up an intellectual face.

We run over to 1 Glencoe Avenue, Wellington, where I meet Miss Eileen Duggan, poet of New Zealand.¹⁸⁴ With her lives her sister, Mrs. Dennehy and a friend, Miss McLeely. They live on a street that is parallel to the main street but is about 200 feet higher than it. Their house is one of those that is built on the side of the mountain. A narrow passageway leads to it

¹⁸⁴ Eileen Duggan (1884–1972) was a popular journalist and New Zealand’s first celebrated poet, earning an international reputation and receiving an OBE in 1937. Her work was particularly prized by Catholics for its religious themes. Though she lived a long life, she was often ill, and the tremor Foley noted was a manifestation of Parkinson’s Disease.

from the street about 25 yards long when one comes to a footbridge over a gully, then through a green painted latch gate, up a steep walk, a long flight of high steps and you are in front of her door bell. Mrs. Dennehy, white haired, about 55, with a pleasant smile, lets us in. "I am glad to meet you, Father, and you are very welcome indeed." With those words she makes me feel perfectly at home.

Miss Duggan extends a warm hand of greeting also. She is a slightly built woman, about 42 years old, with grey hair and a pale sensitive face. Her eyes are Irish blue, her most striking feature. There is a trace of tiredness in them. Her face is that of one who has known physical suffering. Premature lines crease it and she is older than her years. A slight trembling of her hands is a relic of a nervous breakdown some years ago. When she speaks it is with a gentle, quiet deliberation.

During our forty-five minutes together, she is sitting at the right hand side of the fireplace with its red flames throwing dancing patterns on the floor before us. On a chair close to it, the big black cat sits curled up in unconscious contentment. What do we talk about? The chaplains who have passed through and dropped in to say hello. Among them Fr. George King, who, she quietly remarks, "would take nothing from anybody sitting down except the Pope." She laughingly remarks that when Fr. Gascoigne told her my name she looked me up in the Jesuit Seminary magazine that had the pictures of the Jesuit Chaplains. Beside me was Fr. Clancy's picture; "the two types, the ascetic and the opposite." I express a hope that she isn't frightened by the appearance of the owner of that face in person.¹⁸⁵

She is a person whose sanctity shines through her face. It is a privilege just to speak to her. Tomorrow we shall have another get together. However, first she asks me to visit the Missionary Sisters of the

Society of Mary, three of whose members we carried out of Guadalcanal from Bougainville.

SUNDAY, JUNE 6, 1943

0600—Mass aboard the USS George Clymer.

0730—Mass aboard the USS Crescent City.

0915—Mass aboard the USS Hunter Liggett.

Back to the ship where I have dinner and then start out for Miss Duggan's house again. But first I stop at the Sisters' convent on Aurora Terrace. They are overjoyed at the news about the safe arrival of Sisters Adelberta, Ignatius and Martian at Noumea. First definite word they had had about them. Fired questions at me one after another in their happy eagerness to know the full story.

3:30—To Miss Duggan's where I had a delightful afternoon. We talked about books and poets; found her very sharp in her analysis. She was overjoyed when she learned that I know something about Heythrop College, Oxfordshire. A very dear friend of hers, Mrs. Helen Parry Eden¹⁸⁶ lives in a cottage at the end of the drive in Enstone [a village near Oxford].

Had evening meal together and then off to the Catholic Seamen's Institute, 22 Vivian Street, where Fr. Gascoigne introduced me to Mr. Mallia, the zealous pioneer of the house. It was crowded with men and women dancing, playing cards, etc. Benediction given by myself at 9:15. Visit Fr. Gascoigne's room where I am amazed at the marvelous collection of pictures he has. The one of Cardinal Faulhaber depicts his massive character. Superb courage in every line of his granolithic square face. Determined chin, straight eyes relay a warning not to cross him in the interests of his flock. He has been an outspoken critic of Nazism. Gratified to see also an autographed picture of Archbishop Goodier.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁵ George King (1907–1965) was an Army chaplain and a Jesuit of the New England Province. He joined the faculty of the College of the Holy Cross after the war, where he taught history.

¹⁸⁶ A Catholic convert, Eden (1885–1960) was a popular author of devotional poetry.

¹⁸⁷ Michael von Faulhaber (1869–1952), archbishop of Munich from 1917 until his death, was celebrated for his opposition to, and critique of, the Nazi regime. Goodier (1869–1939) was a British Jesuit and the author of devotional books. He served as Bishop of Bombay from 1919 to 1926.

Fr. Gascoigne a most generous host; heedless of time, he gave me the use of his car with himself as the chauffeur.

MONDAY, JUNE 7, 1943

0600–Mass

Today I have the duty watch so I stay close to the ship. Recall that one of the Marines yesterday said that the people here were extremely hospitable to the Americans. He was a boy who is a veteran of Guadalcanal. A fine type of young man, clean-cut, clean-tongued, clean-eyed. One of his friends wrote to his girl about how nice the New Zealand girls were. She wrote back a bit indignantly, asking what they had that the American girls didn't have. He answered, "They have it here."

TUESDAY, JUNE 8, 1943

0600–Mass

To the Convent of the Sisters of Mercy on Abel Smith Street where I pick up the linens that were left there on Thursday. As usual the Sisters are most gracious. Set me up to a cup of tea and cakes. Their Convent perches on the side of a mountain, one of the many that ring the city. Made land of all of this, a tribute to the energy of the people who were not at all thwarted by sheer faces of mountains.

From that Convent to the one on Aurora Terrace where I pick up the hosts, go through the school, speak to the boys and girls in the classes, asking their prayers. In the last class, commercial, I ask the girls if they would like to serve aboard the ship. We could make sailorettes of them. The little boys and girls in the infant class catch my fancy. They are little irresistible tackers, about four and a half to five years old. Their prayers will help to keep us afloat. They sing a song for me with the greatest gusto. Before I leave I give them my blessing. Spend afternoon with Miss Duggan who gives me an

autographed volume of her poetry. Very gracious of her. We talk literature.

In the evening a meeting at the Bishop's house, Anglican Barb-Holland, Archdeacon and Canon Robertshaw. Canon Kilroy, a Scotch Presbyterian. Also present Frs. Kelly and O'Neil, Marine Chaplains; Chaplains Willard, Eckhardt, Magyar, Tolafson, Lutherans, but of different branches, and a Rabbi Katz, who is dressed in black with a Roman collar to boot! In fact of all the civilian ministers there of the Protestant persuasion and there were nine, only two were not wearing the Roman collar.¹⁸⁸

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 9, 1943

0600–Mass. On board today for duty.

THURSDAY, JUNE 10, 1943

0600–Mass

Loading 3rd Regiment of Marines and their cargo. These 3rd Marines are an Infantry Regiment. As somebody said, "Real estate comes very high for them."

Ashore for odds and ends, e.g., pick up pictures for McElrath, books for Vogel, phonograph needles, etc.

New Departure. Again lowering the men in the first wave in the boats from the ship. Hope there are no casualties either now or in the actual operation. Overheard on deck, two Marines talking. "What wave are you in?" "Sixth, what's yours?" "First wave, first boat." "Boy, oh boy, I'll put a blanket on you as I go by."

FRIDAY, JUNE 11, 1943

0600–Mass

Third Regiment of Marines aboard for drills preliminary to landing on a hostile shore. Many of them are veterans of the landing on Guadalcanal last August.

¹⁸⁸ Foley may well have been surprised to find a rabbi in a clerical collar, but in the Anglican world, clerical collars were sometimes worn by non-Christian clergy, and the practice was well established among rabbis in New Zealand, a devotedly Anglican nation. Rabbi Katz was Solomon Katz, who served as a rabbi in England, the United States, and New Zealand, where he led the Wellington Hebrew Congregation synagogue from 1931 until his death in 1944. Like Foley, he was a military chaplain, with a special appointment to serve Jewish-American military men stationed in New Zealand.

We shove off at 0730, stand out in the harbor until 1030 when we start our run on the degaussing range.¹⁸⁹ That run takes about two hours. The picture of Wellington changes each time we shift course. Now she stands out clearly in the morning sun, her white houses sharply backgrounded against the dark hills wrapped in somber autumn brown. Now pale light of the sun illuminates them feebly with a short slanting ray before withdrawing hurriedly into the protection of low-hanging clouds. Drill. For the first time men go down in the boats instead of waiting for them to come back after being put over the side first. Some doubt whether or not the boats will be able to stand the strain. Just in case the bottoms should give way, lines hang down from the cross bar of the Welin davit to save the men from drowning. Hoisting out the boats loaded will save valuable time in the actual battle operation. When will that be? One guess was ventured today as of next August, to time with the anniversary of Guadalcanal. Boy, oh boy, what a long war if we have to take one island a year. Meanwhile Japan has built up a string of unsinkable aircraft carriers, hundreds of these in tropical South Seas Islands.¹⁹⁰

Overheard one sailor saying to another that after this war, “I’m going to get me a wife and build a house with portholes in it. If I don’t, I’ll get home-sick.” On street in Wellington, one sailor obviously lost, sends out an SOS to his mate on the other side of the street whom he recognizes. “Will you give me my bearings? I don’t know fore from aft.”

Receive a copy of the April 5th “Heights,”¹⁹¹ in which I read of the death of John J. Gallagher of Framingham, the first of the many boys I had in class who

gives the last measure of devotion for his country. He was killed in an air crash back home in Ohio.

Also read that Captain Arthur Cullen of the Army Air Force is missing in air operations over Hamburg. The war is beginning to cut into the folks back home.¹⁹²

SATURDAY, JUNE 12, 1943

0600–Mass

0730–Underway for Paikakariki [Paekakariki]¹⁹³, thirty miles up north, for maneuvers. Day is a crisp, clear one as we head out into Cook’s Straits, the channel between the North and South Islands that are New Zealand. Read my Office in the room for half an hour and then lay the keel for the Sunday sermon.

Outside for a breath of air at 8:30; then a dream of beauty. Off on our port side, Mt. Cook, 3800 meters [12,200 feet] high, raises her majestic snow-crowned peaks into God’s azure blue. The color contrasts are breathtaking. The blue sky, the white of the snow, the slatey gray of the mountain below the snowline, then the blue of the Tasman Sea washing the feet of the mountains; and over all, the clear bright sunshine flooding the crisp day.

1200–Set condition 1-A troop landing. Over the side go the troops to take by storm the shore eight miles away. This operation is just child’s play, spirit of the game about it, but there isn’t one of those men who doesn’t know that some one of these days they are going through the same operation; may be in this life one moment and then out of it forever in the next.¹⁹⁴

¹⁸⁹ See note, July 27, 1942.

¹⁹⁰ “Unsinkable aircraft carriers” was military slang for islands.

¹⁹¹ Boston College’s student newspaper.

¹⁹² Arthur Cullen (1929–2006) was the pilot of a B-24 Liberator that was brought down by enemy fire over France on February 15, 1943. Of the 11-member crew, four survived, including Cullen, who was taken prisoner and repatriated at the conclusion of the war.

¹⁹³ Paekakariki was a large Marine base on the southwest coast of New Zealand’s North Island. It was abandoned four months after Foley visited, when the war moved north.

¹⁹⁴ The Second Marine Division was training for landing on Tarawa Atoll, the first central Pacific island to be attacked by US ground forces. Some 1,000 Marines would be killed in the first three days of combat, November 21-23. (See Foley’s entry for December 1, 1943.) A documentary film, *With the Marines at Tarawa*, was developed by Warner Bros and the Office of War Information, and can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QbX6Uvn2vME>

Marines debarking over the side. Stand by watching and thinking that when this is the real attack, I shall silently be giving them my blessing. Notice one lad about 20 shivering with the cold. Ask him if he has a sweater, but he hasn't; bring him into my room. "Fr. Foley is my name." "Mine is... Sorry that I'm not a good Catholic, Father." "How long since last confession?" "--", Father." "All right, but you'll be squared away before tonight, right?" "Right, Father." A sweater is the means of grace being given to that boy. God works in wondrous ways.

A simulated bombing attack by the Air Army of the RAAF [Royal Naval Air Force]. Eight of them run in on us from all angles, strafing, wiggling, swooping in low, then soaring up just when it seems that they will crash into us. All the AA guns of the ship are manned and are blazing away at the dry run.

SUNDAY, JUNE 13, 1943

0600 and 1000—Mass

Another landing drill begins today. Men go over the side in the first operation at 1245. Look on the map in the Chart House up by the bridge. Names of the points of operation here are amusing; suitcase, ash tray, pencil, flat hat, chicken, apple seed and horse radish.

After the landing drill of yesterday, a dozen of the Marines come down with malaria. They had to wade ashore in water up to their waist, cold water too, for these days are bright, clear and crisp. Not cold if one is moving, but if standing still two to three hours as these boys must do after landing, the chill gets into the marrow of the bones.

MONDAY, JUNE 14, 1943

0600—Mass, with Reveille at 0445!

0650—Attack the enemy-held shore. Once again over the side, onto the beach that lies at the foot of these brown mountains.

TUESDAY, JUNE 15, 1943

0300—Reveille, Mass following.

Tempo is stepping up. This attack is a coordinated

one with the USS Hunter Liggett, American Legion and Crescent City. Morning, but black as pitch outside; sharp reminder of the November 8th battle in Africa. Note that we were first at Guadalcanal on February 7th and 8th; that we were attacked by bombing planes on April 8th. Wonder if we are now practicing for a battle that will take place on the anniversary of August 8th when the Marines first hit Guadalcanal?

0815—Simulated dive-bombing attack. Eight fighters and dive bombers come in from all angles repeatedly, strafing and bombing and torpedoing our ships. They wiggle as they come in to splatter their machine guns over a wide area, i.e., their bullets to knock out as many men as they can; then the work of the dive bombers and the torpedo planes will be so much easier. Were these the real thing, we should have been at the bottom in two minutes after the first wave came in on us. This squadron is a unit from the New Zealand Air Force that has been doing such splendid work in the Middle East and Tunisia.

Letter from one of my sisters in which she quotes my mother, "It took a long time for his ship to get started, but boy, oh boy, it is taking a longer time for it to come back for repairs." If she only knew that it may be two years before our ship puts back into a home port again, her morale, which has been wonderful so far, would slip a bit.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 16, 1943

0600—Mass

Another dawn attack on the summer resort of Paekakariki. Day is a miserable one with cold rain driving down, heavy sea running. Off in the distance the defending forces have prepared themselves for the attack. Boats shove off dangerously from the ship. Watching personnel boat being hoisted over the side on port quarter. Bill Olsen from Concord is the boat engineer. Hook lifts the boat off the hatch, swings it too freely over the water. Ship is rolling with the swell, causing the swing. Down into the water, Olsen unhooks the steel circle, the ring that carried the boat. It gently pins his head between itself

and the side of the boat. Had there been any momentum behind it, he would have had at least a fractured skull. As it is, he is dazed, slumps down to the deck rubbing his head. Quickly recovers and is away.

Six miles off shore when we put off the assault waves. Two machine gunners talk about their job. "Secure the nearest elevated spot, Father, then spit hot lead at the defenders." "Any danger of hitting your own men?" "Yes, but it is better to hit a couple of our men and save two hundred. They expect it." We move in about two miles off shore. Reports come back about abominable conditions on the beach. Heavy surf has wrecked eight boats already. Men have flung selves on shore through cold water, shoulder high in places where the boats could not get any closer. Defenders had them at their mercy due to wretched conditions.

THURSDAY, JUNE 17, 1943

0600–Mass

Day is another cold, blustery one with half a dozen casualties picked up from the heavy running sea; smashed ankles, sore heads.

Finished "Whistles of Silver" by Helen Parry Eden.¹⁹⁵

"Devotion standeth in man's soul
With shoes of swiftness shod,
'Tis thy prompt will to yield thyself
To the high nests of God,
'Tis the surrender of desire
To serve His lightest nod'." (p. 67)

"Devotion keeps not back one grain;
She is God's loving-cup to drain,
His managed stead to spur or rein,
His purse to spend (If He but deign)
To the last piece of gold. (pp. 67–68)
O that I was where I would be,
Then would I be where I am not

But where I am, I needs must be
And where I would be, I cannot."

"The magic of sanctity is nothing but the good will of a mortal added to the grace of God."

FRIDAY, JUNE 18, 1943

0600–Mass

Into Wellington after all those boats that were casualties on the beach are towed back to the ship for repairs. We pound down along the coast in a heavy, rolling sea, dark, lowering clouds overhead, no sun at all and white caps rearing their heads on the waters. Finished maneuvers on this trip. Two boys killed at Pa[e]kakariki; one a sailor who was trapped under a ramp of one of the personnel boats. The boat ground him under and the stern of it finished him. The propeller cut him badly.

I spend the evening with Miss Eileen Duggan, Mrs. Dennehy and Miss McLeely. As on the previous visit, her "hearth flowers into flame" before me as we talk of books and people and the things of the soul.

I have difficulty finding the place for it is pitch dark when I get ashore at 7 o'clock. Pass it by; no one of six people I met know where it is. Suddenly stumble into it when I had given up the search as a bad job. Miss Duggan remarks that our boys have captured the hearts of everybody by their utter unselfconsciousness, their open approach and their pride in their religion.

SATURDAY, JUNE 19, 1943

Dark as usual until 0730 in the morning. Rain-Rain-Rain. Beginning to doubt that Wellington people will see the sun again. Out of total of eight days spent there on two visits, only saw the sun once. Rest of the time, cold, murky mists, either riding in from the sea or blowing down from the mountain tops.

¹⁹⁵ Helen P. Eden (1885–1960) was a British author of devotional poems and stories whose work was praised by G.K. Chesterton and Joyce Kilmer. These lines are from her book, *A Dialogue of Devotion*, published in 1922.

On trams, conductorettes are dressed in blue trousers and heavy overcoats of the same color. On empty one the girl asks me how I like the country. Irishman's answer, I made my own, "Good country if it had a roof over it." She says that her job as a conductorette is a tough one. Not every girl can stand it. Public is a hard-driving customer. "However, you tyke it and come up with a smile." Her remark on the weather: "An extraordinary bad spin of it we are having lately."

About 12 o'clock we heave up anchor for Pa[e]kakariki again, make the run in about four hours. It is a much shorter distance than the time indicates, but we have to swing in and around a number of islands.

In the evening the sun tries desperately to come out from behind the clouds, but does not succeed except in spots. She restricts herself to indirect lighting. Not shining down on us as we swing at anchor, but a mile away without showing her pale features.

SUNDAY, JUNE 20, 1943

0300—Reveille!!! Those early hours, only three after midnight.

0400—Mass, private; no public Mass even though it is Sunday for this morning there is full combat attack; men are to go over the side shortly, viz. at 0430. I step out, murmur a prayer that casualties will not be heavy. Ominous looking sea is running high, most dangerous for invasion boats and tank lighters. At 0430 landing postponed until daylight for the danger is obvious.

0700 — Men start going over the side for the enemy-held shore. Some boat casualties after the first wave hits the beach. Surf tosses them wildly about and flings them up on the shore. They have smashed propellers, bent screws, holes in their sides. Some struggle back under their own power, others are towed by those fortunate not to be casualties themselves.

Morning drags with unloading of troops; the Marines and cargo far behind schedule. Boats available dwindling with every load. So far no men hurt,

thank God. Day is overcast with a high wind blowing and a rough sea tossing.

Same holds for the afternoon; no attempt made to keep up with the debarkation, for it is an impossibility. We are supposed to unload both troops and cargo and make a getaway within eight hours lest we be sunk. According to the plan, the Crescent City has already gone under from enemy planes in the simulated attack. She is nowhere to be seen. Has been dispatched to Wellington, four hours away.

7:30 in the evening I have Mass in the Mess Hall, starboard side, the first night Mass celebrated aboard the ship. There are about 25 men present. I thought I might have all Catholic men on duty, but right after I started the word was passed, "First Division stand by to hoist in boat # 6." That took away some of my flock. Then five minutes later another word passed from the bridge, "Second Division stand by to hoist in the gig."

Seemed strange to myself and the men to have Mass in the evening. We were deeply grateful for the privilege.

At 10 o'clock before turning in, I step outside onto the catwalk outside my room. Cloudy sky has cleared, neither wind nor sea have abated. Moon is full, sky wears windswept face, no clouds, just a few stray slashes of white as if an artist took a huge brush and swished it carelessly across the heavens.

MONDAY, JUNE 21, 1943

Shortest day of the year.

0400—Reveille

0500—Mass

Underway according to the plan of the day but we postpone the start. At breakfast I learn the reason. Last night a heavy sea was running. Salvage parties were trying to get the stranded boats off the beach. All three ships, the Crescent City, Hunter Liggett and ourselves had some on the beach.

At breakfast Mr. Trapp informs me that the Hunter Liggett salvage party in their boat capsized with the loss of fourteen sailors, drowned. Seventeen men were saved. The huge seas turned their boat over one mile off shore. For the rest of the night until five this morning, in accordance with orders from the American Legion, Flagship PF Comm. Trans. Division, "Search for Survivors." They travelled back and forth over the watery grave of those boys. Thank God the number of deaths has been revised downward to eight enlisted men and one officer. Mr. Kreutzer informs me that just before he left the beach yesterday, two bodies, one of the officer and the other an enlisted man were washed ashore. Both of them had nasty gashes across their foreheads, where the boat had evidently hit them when she capsized.

May the Lord have mercy on their souls and the souls of all the soldiers, sailors and Marines who have died so far in the struggle.

0600—We drop anchor again in Wellington Harbor. Later tie up to the dock and unload the rest of the cargo. I call up Miss Eileen Duggan to inform her that since I have duty this evening, I am ship-bound and cannot share her hospitality.

She tells me that they had a big fire burning last Saturday, but I failed to put in an appearance. She knew the reason without being told.

Picked up Auckland paper. Amazed at the details given of the casualties the other day on the 100-plane raid on Guadalcanal: 25 American Flyers killed, 22 injured, 29 missing. These enlightening details glaringly omitted from all American accounts. No wonder 17 men recently resigned from

the Office of War Information, complaining that instead of news, the American People were getting the product of slick salesmanship.¹⁹⁶

TUESDAY, JUNE 22, 1943

0600—Mass

Rain-Rain-Rain-Rain again for sixteenth time in Wellington. Happy meeting of Barrett, B.C. '41 and Jack Sheehan, Holy Cross '37 on the dock here. We shoot the breeze for a while, chasing our memories back to Mt. St. James and Chestnut Hill.¹⁹⁷

Mail arrives today, as always bringing good news and bad. Holtz, 2nd Division, learns that his mother was severely injured in an explosion in the munitions factory where she was working. Green, Radar man, learns that his steady for two years has jilted him after he lavished money and gifts on her. I will write a letter for him that will go to the girl. A letter such that when she receives it, she will say, "And I gave up that kind of a man. What a mistake I made." He signs it.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 23, 1943

0600—Mass

0800—Off to Auckland. Heavy casualties have finally convinced the big shots that boats and men can take only so much punishment. Total: Ten deaths and dozens of invasion boats ruined, either totally or temporarily.

THURSDAY, JUNE 24, 1943

0600—Mass

One year ago today I came aboard; 12 months sea duty and still floating, thank God. May Our Lord and Our Lady continue to take care of us during this coming year.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁶ Established by President Roosevelt at the beginning of the war, the Office of War Information was repeatedly accused by Congress of concealing truth from American citizens. On April 14, 1943, a group of writers resigned from the OWI, stating that their attempts to provide an objective view of the war was being subverted by "high-pressure promoters who prefer slick salesmanship to honest information." President Truman closed the office in September 1945, a month after Japan surrendered. As to the air attack on Guadalcanal on June 16, 1943, the Auckland paper was mistaken, The Japanese lost 15 fighter planes and 13 dive bombers while the United States lost six fighter planes and five pilots.

¹⁹⁷ The hills—40 miles apart—on which the College of the Holy Cross and Boston College campuses, respectively, stand.

¹⁹⁸ The *Clymer* was the first American ship to serve in both the European and Pacific Theaters, and it sailed 163,000 miles over the course of the war. It was struck by enemy fire only once, when a shell damaged its radio antenna during the Africa campaign, and it acquired the nickname "The Lucky George." It served in the Korean and Vietnam wars and was awarded a total of 15 battle stars before it was sold for scrap on July 26, 1968.

Auckland, city of sunshine. Glorious sun beating down on us in this winter month, strange to say, in June, but overcoats in order.

FRIDAY, JUNE 25, 1943

0600–Mass

Ashore look for Convent of Good Shepherd and Sisters of St. Joseph teaching, but wind up in Church of Good Shepherd. Pastor Dean [William J. Murphy's assistant Fr. Linehan takes me to Convent where I first started, then to Franciscan Friary, then to Hospital of Sisters of Mercy.

Convent on high mountain, on left side, Tasman Sea, on right, Pacific Ocean. What a view! Purple-clad mountains falling away on the horizon, blue ocean waters below and modern city buildings raising their stone fingers to the blue skies above. Our Lady's statue on top of Hospital.

SATURDAY, JUNE 26, 1943

We are anchored out in the stream for there is no docking space available for us. Off to our port side is a Liberty ship that had an unwelcome visitor recently. A torpedo let in daylight from port to starboard; went clean through her.

In the afternoon we tie up to the dock, start loading Marines, not for maneuvers, either for Guadalcanal or the real thing. Namely, BATTLE.

SUNDAY, JUNE 27, 1943

0600–Mass. Anniversary of the first Sunday Mass aboard the Clymer at Charleston, S.C.

0900–Mass aboard the USS Hunter Liggett for her men and those of the American Legion. Splendid turnout, 500 present. Stay aboard Sunday, for I have duty. Fr. Linehan, Auckland priest, my guest for evening meal.

MONDAY, JUNE 28, 1943

0600–Mass

Today we take aboard the 1500 Marines for Guadalcanal. They are the 9th Marines, all primed for fighting. Have been in training for over a year. Scuttlebutt has it that we will ferry them to Guadalcanal; in the meantime after we have shoved off, they will strike somewhere; then we are fetching reinforcements back from either Auckland or Wellington.

Hear confessions aboard the Liggett for two hours.

TUESDAY, JUNE 29, 1943

0600–Mass

Dinner today at the Church of the Good Shepherd; Pastor is Dean Murphy, Curate Fr. Linehan. During the afternoon meet two other pastors, Shaw and Donnelly. Stay for supper when we have blood pudding. Years since I had that good English meat.

Talking with Marine and what lies ahead of him. He remarked that it was not the bullet or shell that had his name on it that worried him. It was the kind that simply said, "To whom it may concern."

At night before getting into bed, set up again outfit that I would take over the side with me if "it" happened, long-handled underwear, Vaseline, white cap, sweat shirt, colored glasses. We are back in the old routine again. I don't want to cook by day and freeze by night if I have to hang onto a plank or squat in a life raft.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 30, 1943

0600–Mass

Still dark until 0730 in the morning, for these are the winter months in this part of the world; June, July and August. Spend day cleaning up office. Hear about 25 confessions. Night, very little sleep. We run into heavy ground swells, ship rolls and pitches, shattering of china below in Wardroom. Everything is adrift in everybody's room until firmly secured. Not more than two fitful hours of sleep all night.

THURSDAY, JULY 1, 1943

0600–Mass; about 25 Communion.

Heavy sea still running. Hear confessions in preparation for tomorrow, which is the Feast of the Sacred Heart and also First Friday.

Operations are afoot in the Solomons again. Our men have taken Rendova Island, five miles south of New Georgia, and have attacked New Georgia itself. We have pushed steadily north. Eventually hope to take Bougainville or isolate that by capturing Rabaul.

FRIDAY, JULY 2, 1943

First Friday and Feast of the Sacred Heart.

0630—Mass; about 50 Holy Communions.

Day is warm, for we are now about 700 miles north of New Zealand. Yesterday afternoon the cold weather started to fade out. Now we have dropped the jackets and the heavy socks until we hit winter months again when we return to Auckland as scuttlebutt has it.

Radio News Release this morning reports that we have attacked an island five miles from Munda, Rekata. These men will either go straight on there as reinforcements or will be left at Guadalcanal. Latter seems to be probable for ships of this nature and big tonnage are not normally sent within fifty miles, let alone five of an enemy-held airfield.

SATURDAY, JULY 3, 1943

0600—Mass; about 75 present.

Overheard on the Boat Deck, one sailor telling another “Go take a long walk on a short deck.” On Main Deck about an ensign, “He’s just a spare gear,” i.e., no good.

Confessions at night.

SUNDAY, JULY 4, 1943

0615—Mass; about 200 present. 0900—Second Mass. 1000—General Service.

1200—Dinner. Had just sat down when General Quarters peeped. All bolted from the table; unidentified plane on the horizon. Ten minutes later we are secure; it is one of our own. Back to a good big Sunday meal.

1500—Rosary and Benediction; about 200 present. After it, take names of men who wish me to inform their mothers that they have been to church aboard our ship.

Picked up radio telegram in Commander Olesen’s room. “Gives position, then men in foxholes and machine guns set up to attack immediately.” Lot of drama packed into those few lines.

Remark at table: Captain Schaub says that the men there on New Georgia are learning the lesson now of actual combat. He hopes that the tuition will not be too high. Another Marine Officer remarks that “we are engaged in a new real estate development.”

We learn that the USS McCawley has been sunk some miles north of us. She was a ship about our size.¹⁹⁹

My mother writes in her latest letter that although her sons are not in actual combat, she knows that they are doing their part. If she only knew! Ed spends hours during the night in foxholes, while we occasionally are ducking and weaving and twisting and turning as Jap bombers drop their calling cards on us or subs tickle us.

MONDAY, JULY 5, 1943

0615—Mass

During Mass a plane roars by at deck level so it is obviously one of our own. We have an aircraft carrier out ahead of us that is sending her birds aloft. We are carrying our heaviest cargo load of all our seven trips to Guadalcanal and the precious human freight.

¹⁹⁹ The *McCawley* was said to have been torpedoed by Japanese planes off Guadalcanal while delivering cargo. Nearly all the crew were saved before the ship was scuttled on June 30, 1943. It was soon determined that the torpedoes that destroyed the ship were fired in error from American torpedo boats. A redrafting of PT boat communications protocols followed.

These boys are highly trained Marines with the best of equipment who are on razor edge to get into battle.

Morale in the Navy is made up of four elements: mail, movies and meals with liberty to complete the quartet. Officer says work should be included. He is right. Work, something to do, is a blessing in war as well as in peace.

TUESDAY, JULY 6, 1943

0615—Mass on Upper Deck Aft; attendance of about 150.

We should anchor about noon today. Lot of well-organized bustle aboard the ship as Marines prepare to debark. On the decks are stacked their barracks bags and bed rolls, 1400 of each.

0945—General Quarters. Submarine alarm; Tojo's underwater express is trying to crowd us off the surface. Destroyer sows depth charge pattern. Ship shivers slightly even though dropped a good two miles away.

1000—Report from bridge. "All Marines below deck; enemy planes en route."

1030—We are secured from General Quarters. Thank God no hits, no casualties. "How are your nerves, Joe?"

Now I start to get Ed's bag ready; some filet steak, peanuts, Milky Ways, Nestle's chocolate bars, Grif-fin's Bars, fresh apples, cigars, fountain pen and pencil, leads, matches, Wrigley's gum, etc.

1145—Boat #6 is lowered to the rail. While we are still underway she is lowered into the water and off we are to the beach. The day was cloudy; now it has broken beautifully and once again a hot tropical sun is streaming down on the twenty of us in this boat, 15 Navy men and 5 Marines. We head in, ride the crest of a wave and brace ourselves. We run into the beach head on, drop with the rudder, down drops the ramp and we run out through the water.

Beach is a long strip of smooth sand, fringed with palms. Waves are breaking high on her, for it is apparently flood tide. Wait around for a while, bum a ride after fifteen minutes to a Raider Camp where Bob Laverty, whose father E. V. Laverty is manager of Liggett's drugstore at [Boston's] South Station, is stationed.

At 1:30 with Hutchins and Simmons, two enlisted men, we start for Henderson Field from this place called Teteri. I have to be back to the ship by four o'clock, so time is precious. Before we start I see some reports of the story on the action up north on New Georgia. "Bomb hit; twenty of our men killed." "200 wounded."

Visit bamboo Church of St. Bartholomew, native church, bamboo slats tied with strips, not a nail in it, about thirty feet high, twenty yards long and thirty feet wide. Sand on the floor, bamboo altar, one big cross beam in the center resting on two big beams, no nails, bound together with wooden pegs. On this beam are crude decorations in white paint of the Cross, a chalice, IHS, a crown of thorns. Here the natives gather round their French Marist missionary to hear the story that never grows old, Our Lord's life.

A shout from Simmons; he is set to go off. We buzz for the fourteen mile trip along a sandy road, first parallel with the beach, then within a couple of miles we see and hear the four-motored bombers roaring overhead, either returning from Munda²⁰⁰ bombing or on their way out. On out to the main stem where traffic picks up; water trailers, gravel trucks, ambulances, jeeps, gas trucks moving smoothly over coral roads built by the CB's. After about ten miles I am in familiar territory again. We are crossing the Tenaru River, the Lunga, where Ed and I first crouched in a Jap dugout.

Down to the Field Hospital where I hear a record being played over the amplifying system. I wonder if that is Ed working the machine from the Red Cross hut. I meander down to the Recreation Tent, inquire

²⁰⁰ Settlement on New Georgia Island, where military operations were in progress, and the site of a Japanese airfield.

of three sick men lounging around in pajamas if Ed Foley is around. A bellow from inside, “Where have you been?” I explain about my wintering in New Zealand, invite him to have a bite of an apple from the same island. After a few minutes we retire to the outskirts of “town” as Ed facetiously calls his new home. There he investigates the contents of the egg crate that I have brought with me. The Schaeffer fountain pen and pencil catch his eye. What catches my eye are the small rubber boots he is wearing, an inheritance from some of the boys who have gone back to the States for Officers Candidate School. Ed informs me that he has received word that his application has been duly received. I hope that such a notice is not the forerunner of a rejection slip later.

How does Ed look? As well as ever. He feels fine but misses Fr. Flaherty who has been transferred to Australia. “Things just sagged when he left. Now Mass is celebrated only on Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday and we miss daily Mass.”

Marty McDonough, one of Ed’s mates, enters the tent, and we shake hands. Now the fifteen minutes of my visit are up and back to the ship. “So long, Ed.” “So long, John.” A shake and we are off again. Back to the Tetero Beach where necks are strained upwards at an 18” dragon-like lizard that is ambling down a coconut trunk, looks bewildered about half way down, at the crowd of Marines that are gaping at it, one of whom unsheathes his knife for an immediate operation. Lizard refuses to christen said knife with its blood and goes back to roost in the coconuts at the top of the tree.

Heavy action is taking place a short distance from here. Heavy Army bombers, Boeing Fortresses²⁰¹, Billy Mitchell dive bombers²⁰², torpedo planes are

taking off from Henderson Field and Carney Field “like flocks of ducks” as one of the sailors described it. I count 41 in the sky at one period. These Flying Fortresses! They go out without any sort of protection. As a squadron of eight of them roar overhead we can plainly see the murderous snouts of their guns and cannons in their nose, in their tails, top-side, where their blisters²⁰³ glance back at the setting sun. But the plane that takes my fancy is the P-38.²⁰⁴ I never tire watching them soar up off the landing strip and then climb straight up, power unlimited.

We continue unloading cargo all night. If I only had known that, I could have had Ed aboard!

WEDNESDAY, JULY 7 1943

0600–Mass

1000–Destroyer Renshaw comes alongside for fueling. I climb down a ladder over our side, slip across, see the Executive Officer and ask for permission to hear confessions of the Catholic men. “Certainly.” The Catholic men come and make their peace with God through me while I sit in the forward ammunition clipping room just aft of the second turret under the bridge. My chair is an ammunition box loaded with 20 mm bullets ready to tear into a Jap plane. This destroyer last night shelled the New Georgia installations of the Japs heavily. It is only a three-hour run for them from here. They made thirty-three knots an hour.

6:00 P.M. We take aboard some of the human debris of war, about ninety wounded, the first casualties of the action up north. Tragic some of the cases. Some, loss of vision; others, mangled arms and legs, victims of bullets and shrapnel bombings. This group

²⁰¹ B-17 Flying Fortress bombers.

²⁰² B-25 Mitchell bombers, named for William Mitchell, an Army officer in World War I who was instrumental in the development of American military air power.

²⁰³ Transparent plastic mounts for machine guns.

²⁰⁴ Lockheed P-38 Lightnings were among the fastest planes used in WWII. They accounted for more Japanese aircraft “kills” than any airplane in the American arsenal.

is from Vanganu and Rendova.²⁰⁵ At latter place, fifteen Jap two-motored bombers dropped their load of bombs on the beachhead with twenty killed and two hundred wounded.

Some concussion victims whose ears were deafened and whose eyeballs are still enlarged. Some of the men ask, "Do you recognize me, Father?" We carried them here a few months ago. "I never thought I would be coming back this way, Father." Blindness cases most tragic of all.

8:00 P.M. – Underway again, this time we believe for Noumea.

THURSDAY, JULY 8, 1943
0615 – Mass

Busy taking care of the material needs of the 98 wounded we have aboard. They are a pitiable lot, this sample of the human debris of war, most of them bombing victims. One squadron of 15 bombers did this work. What must it be like over Europe where hundreds of them concentrate on one area in a thickly congested modern city?

McMullen, from Bangor, Maine, is stone blind; will always be. Was a clerk in a Division Headquarters; bomb fragment scooped across center of his face, wrecking both eyes and leaving only the tip of his nose. Pathetic, as he asks me to describe the Purple Heart to him, award for Military Merit. Purple and white ribbon, medal is heart-shaped, with medallion of Washington in the center, is bronze colored. Some of the concussion cases are still stunned psychologically, others deafened, others with both eyes black and blue, bloodshot. Concussion breaks blood vessels. Hand out cigarettes to the men. They have only what they brought on their backs.

Two Army officers, Captain and Lieutenant, are psychoneurotic cases. One imagines he has a bad leg;

the other insists that he wants to see no more blood for the duration.

FRIDAY, JULY 9, 1943
0600 – Mass

Today I am in the dry goods business distributing shirts, sox, shoes, pants, etc. to the wounded men who came aboard without anything literally, with nothing but the sheets that covered them on stretchers.

Visit from Murov, Jewish boy from Louisiana, who is haunted by the feeling of remorse that he is running away from the zone of combat. Sight of the wounded stabs his conscience. Feels that he has disgraced his family because he is a coward, so he says. After a chat of half an hour he leaves, feeling better.

SATURDAY, JULY 10, 1943
0600 – Mass

Ensign Panitz leaves us tomorrow. Came aboard only six weeks ago, thinks that he would be able to do better work in another branch of the service rather than aboard a combat transport. Lt. Morey, "Hope he gets reassigned [to a combat unit], Father, and he is with us when we are making the next beachhead."

SUNDAY, JULY 11, 1943
0600 – Mass
0900 – Mass

No General Service, for at 1000 we are anchoring [at Noumea]. First and Second Divisions are busy hoisting out boats. Hospital Division arranging for transportation of wounded men; Supply Division making up a working party to take on stores. Such assignments wreck my plans for General Service. 1100 – Ashore to Red Cross first, where I pick up magazines for the men, meet Mr. Mason, boss, and Robert Atmore, assistant, and Miss Martin from 18 Pritchard Avenue, Somerville [Massachusetts].

²⁰⁵ Islands in the New Georgia chain that were invaded as part of a campaign to capture the Japanese airfield at Munda Point on the central island.

1130—To Ecole de Libre where Sisters Joseph and Guy and Mother Superior extend a royal welcome. Want to know what my “harrowing experiences” have been since last we met in April. Have been praying faithfully since then for my ship and her men.

1:00—Out to Manse Vite to see Paul Doherty who is ill with pneumonia, now well on the road to recovery. Looks as well as ever; must have been quite plump for he says he has lost weight. His mother will be glad to learn that we met.

3:00—To the USS Prometheus where I pick up six films for later showing to the men. We must return each one of these to the ship when we put into Noumea again. Write to mother and sister about the day and how it was spent.

MONDAY, JULY 12, 1943

0600—Mass

Chief Bill Hughes informs me that he just lost his father in Lawrence, 37 Bowdoin Street. Promise to offer Mass for him tomorrow morning.

3:00—Underway for Auckland, New Zealand, again.

TUESDAY, JULY 13, 1943

0615—Mass for Bill Hughes’s father.

Aboard we have the survivors, fifty of them, from the USS McCawley, torpedoed by a plane at New Georgia, ten to fifteen men in the engine room [were killed]. Japs went straight for McCawley, apparently aware that aboard her were Admiral Turner and General Harmon. Passed over President liners.²⁰⁶

General Quarters at 6:30; submarine alarm. Ship quivers as she boils ahead at full speed, executing at the same time evasive maneuvers. What a life!

WEDNESDAY, JULY 14, 1943

0615—Mass

Speaking with members of the gun crew on port side aft, two of them new men. They were aboard two AK-cargo Liberty ships that were torpedoed south of Guadalcanal at 4:45 A.M. on June 23, 1943. Of the thirty-five soldiers that one was carrying, twenty-seven were killed as they slept on hatch number one. Torpedo came into hold number one. The ships had destroyer escort but subs still slipped in and put their fish into her.

Calloway, one of the new men, wants shore duty, for he has a case of chronic seasickness. Has been retching badly all day. Doesn’t seem to be feigning, for Gorman, painter, with whom he has been working reports that he has been deadly sick all day.

Universality of the Catholic Church. Captain Ross, Marine Corps ace, downed more planes than any other flyer. Motor failed, set plane down near a small island, Malaita, “inhabited by the worst natives on the Solomons,” said the Chicago Tribune. There Ross met a French Archbishop and four priests, Dutch, Norwegian, Italian and American. Next Ross went to Mass where the “worst natives” assisted and sang hymns.²⁰⁷

THURSDAY, JULY 15, 1943

0600—Mass

Ship has been fairly quiet these days, for we have it once more to ourselves. Morning breaks bright and cool, clear, bright sky as the windswept headlands

²⁰⁶ Re *McCawley*: see entry under July 4, 1943. Richmond K. Turner was in charge of amphibious forces in the Pacific; Millard F. Harmon was a lieutenant general in the Army Air Force. The presidents were a fleet of passenger ships named for American presidents. The military purchased them in 1938 from a bankrupt shipping company.

²⁰⁷ Joseph Ross (1915–2003), who shot down 25 Japanese aircraft in the Guadalcanal Campaign, received the Medal of Honor from President Roosevelt. Ross may well have sung hymns with his Catholic rescuers, but he did so as an Evangelical Protestant. He would serve two terms as governor of South Dakota.

of New Zealand come into view about 9 o'clock. No sign of habitation along these volcanic hills. They rise brown and bare to the skies, awaiting the day of development as the places near the big cities of Auckland and Wellington are being opened out. Only signs of life are the ducks, little ones, scores of them that are loafing on the surface as we steam by. Now and then a school of porpoises arch their backs rhythmically and slowly as they rise out of the water and quickly dive again.

3:00 P.M.—We dock again where we were two weeks ago. Meet Fr. [Robert] Minton who helps me to arrange a dance that eventually petered out, unfortunately, because Captain said we would not be in long enough. Fr. Minton aboard for dinner this evening; he hails from Indianapolis. We have a delightful two hours together.²⁰⁸

FRIDAY, JULY 16, 1943

0600 – Mass

[In Auckland] we begin loading the Marines whom we are to take to Guadalcanal. In the evening I stroll down the main stem.²⁰⁹ At a corner of a street is a fruit and vegetable store. Looking for some grapes, I step in. “They are out of season.” Espy a bunch of heather and some lovely flowers with small purplish faces. Buy bouquet for 6d, (\$12) each. They, the heather sprigs, really perfume the room. Dr. Walker and Lt. Cdr. Gilchrist both remark on intoxicating odor.

Meet Jim Lynch, 57 Vernon Street, Waltham [Massachusetts]. He tells me that he is going ashore to see his girl, a Navy nurse. How did he pick her? He noticed that she went to Mass and Holy Communion every morning, crossing the Pacific on the [USS] Lurline. “That’s the kind of girl I want.” Engineered an introduction. They like each other after

going around for a while. Now after four months, they are engaged.

SATURDAY, JULY 17, 1943

0600—Receive some 1200 books from the Victory Book Campaign. Some good, some so so.²¹⁰

Weather here now in Auckland is bright and clear. No rain since we have moved in. Unusual, for now it is winter. Last month, twenty-five out of thirty days were rainy. Then the last two times we were in, it poured and poured.

SUNDAY, JULY 18, 1943

0630—Mass aboard own ship.

0900—Mass aboard the Hunter Liggett.

1030—Mass aboard the American Legion.

Chaplain Barnes of the latter detached as of this morning at 0830. On his way home to his wife and four children in California after sixteen months at sea. In the evening Fr. Minton and Jack Convery from New York City come aboard for dinner. Both pleasant company. They stay for the movie, the “Great Dictator” with Charlie Chaplin.

MONDAY, JULY 19, 1943

0600—Mass with 100 Marines in attendance, about half of whom receive Holy Communion. All young boys about 18 to 20, anxious to be on their way to actual combat. As yet they have seen nothing of the horrors of war, the blood, the stench, the filth. They haven’t seen men alongside them blown to bits, blinded, disemboweled. They haven’t walked over their dead bodies, they haven’t sat in the stench of their corruption, the fellows they talked with about home and sports and their favorite ball club, to whom

²⁰⁸ Robert M. Minton, an Army chaplain, served as a pastor in the Indianapolis archdiocese after the war. Posted to Guadalcanal, he appears in six of Foley’s entries in 1943 and 1944.

²⁰⁹ “Main Stem” is naval slang for the forward part of a ship.

²¹⁰ The Victory Book Campaign was a short-lived morale-booster program run by civilians and “designed to provide entertaining and instructive reading” for American troops. Used books were donated by civilians—Boy Scout troops collected volumes by going door-to-door—and Foley’s complaint may have to do with the fact that the books were seldom of literary quality.

they confided their hopes and ambitions about what they would do when they got home, when “this is over.” One taste of all this and then they will no longer be clamoring for action, as they are now. They have yet to learn the face of war is a savage, repulsive one.

TUESDAY, JULY 20, 1943

0630–Mass

Men and Marines are getting restless that we have not shoved off yet. Waiting period is always tedious for them, especially when they have no liberty. Little for them to do all day aboard ship. Many read, but find that ship is rather restricting. They can’t take a walk down the main stem.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 21, 1943

0630–Mass

21st and some of the 9th Marines aboard. Three travelling chaplains, Fr. Joe Conway, Chaplains Ribble and Reeves. Fr. Conway says Mass at 0800 in the Library.

No liberty for the crew!!! What a skipper! Men wouldn’t go through tissue paper for him!²¹¹

THURSDAY, JULY 22, 1943

0630–Mass

Men of ship’s company boiling last night and today. No liberty granted by the Captain. Why? No doubt has a reason, but whatever it is, it works a hardship on the crew. To be in port without any ostensible reason for cancelling liberty when the other ships in our Division have liberty and the Officers aboard our ship have it and the men don’t does not make for good morale.

Unfortunately, the men will be happy when he is transferred. He is not liked by his men. He has the reputation of being inconsiderate of his crew in the lit-

tle things that are the big things, e.g. liberty, water for the showers; when he does grant liberty, holding them back for hours needlessly and then bringing them back earlier than the other ships. I share their opinion.

FRIDAY, JULY 23, 1943

0630–Mass

In retrospect: Last Saturday when all arrangements for Ship’s Dance were completed and at once called off by Captain because it was to be on Sunday night. One hundred cases of beer that were bought for the crew sold to the Marines aboard. When I remonstrated, he said that “They can get plenty here. If they haven’t any money, we’ll give them some.” Suspect his promises from past performance. If and when men find out these things, will make them unhappy. Later learn that Officers are having a dance on Sunday night. When Sunday night comes, Captain attends. Hypocrite! Told me that we would scandalize New Zealanders by Sunday dance, then Officers have one with him there! I had an invite, supposed to go, as usually did, to put in an appearance, but stayed aboard with the men.

I had all the arrangements made, even to making a special call to the Lord Mayor of Auckland to grease the way. Captain asked me, “Do you approve of dance Sunday night?” “If they start the day right by going to church, there is nothing wrong with a dance on Sunday night under the circumstances, for it is impossible to hold it on any other night.” “No, we might cause surprise to the New Zealanders.”

1030–Underway for Noumea, four of us, Crescent City, American Legion, Hunter Liggett with us. Trip is uneventful down the long channel. Passengers marvel at the rugged scenery that flanks our port side as we snake through the narrow passageways. One rock, tooth-shaped at the top, stands out lonesomely about two miles off shore. It is a lava souvenir from some hot volcano long ago. It is leaning

211 As Foley elsewhere speaks well of Captain Arthur T. Moen, a 1917 graduate of the Naval Academy who had been the commanding officer of the *Clymer* since December 1942, he must have been referring to Captain Frank R. Talbot, a 1921 graduate of Annapolis who briefly served contiguously with Moen before taking command of the ship in September 1943.

toward the shore. All three hundred feet of it is like a willow sapling as though it had been straining to keep up with its mates as they made land and then having failed, it was frozen in its present position.

SATURDAY, JULY 24, 1943

0600–Mass

No stormy night as the last time we headed out of Auckland. Fr, Conway sleeps the sleep of the just and celebrates Mass at 1730 (5:30 P.M.) This evening both of us hear confessions in preparation for tomorrow.

0600–Mass. 0900–Mass. 1000–Protestant Worship. 1500–Rosary and Benediction. At all the services some of the finest turnouts that we have ever had aboard. Marines are excellent Catholics. Most of them are appallingly young. No wonder they are called the kids of the service.

Plane zooms overhead. One Marine remarks to the other, “Boy, I sure like to see those babies over us.” Feeling is shared by all. Sight of our own planes generates a feeling of security and confidence. While they are over us, we know that none of Tojo’s boys will bother us.

1000–Three ships on the horizon, two cargo and one patrol craft. Last joins us and others go on their way to Auckland unattended. All passengers crowd the rails to catch sight of strange ships at sea.

Day is beautiful one; weather has grown warmer as we go tieless and coatless once again. Marines stand up in the bow of the ship watching the crisp lines of creamy spray curving over and over endlessly and tirelessly.

MONDAY, JULY 26, 1943

0600–Mass

We arrive at Noumea, the Dumbea Harbor area, about 0930. I go ashore to pick up some Red Cross gear, newspapers, magazines and comics.

Ship is loading the invasion barges that we lack. Won’t be long before we pull out, fully equipped again. Captain Jack Delahanty of the Marines stays in my room until midnight, telling me that he asks God for two things every day, that he will not be a coward in battle, and that God will spare him if it is His Holy Will. Earnest, strongly emotional in all his speech and gestures, manly to his fingertips, he need have no worry about his qualities of leadership.

TUESDAY, JULY 27, 1943

0630–Mass

This morning bright and early we shove off for the Canal again. These Marines are the readingest public we have had aboard. They have over 700 books out. One of them is John King of 1387 Mt. Auburn Street, Cambridge [Massachusetts], who went three years to Harvard, then jumped into the Marine Corps. Army Air Corps was slow in picking him up, though he had made his application, so he acted on the spur of the moment and found himself in a Marine uniform. “Why didn’t you try for an officer’s commission?” I asked him. “Because my father was an officer in the last war and he told me to be content with an enlisted man’s status.” He said he did not want to live with his conscience if he was at all responsible for the death of men under his command due to his own incompetence and ignorance.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 28, 1943

0630–Mass. Well attended by the Marines who, as usual, are excellent churchgoers. Most of them are amazingly young, some of them having yet to shave. This is a well-drilled outfit, excellently equipped and headed by good officers. They should give a fine account of themselves in actual battle.

THURSDAY, JULY 29, 1943

0630–Mass

General Quarters alarm at ten o’clock that spices the routine of the morning. Passengers freeze to the bulkhead while we hurry to our battle stations.

FRIDAY, JULY 30, 1943

0630–Mass

1430—We arrive at our debarkation point, Teteri, which is the same as our last trip here to Guadalcanal. However, the Captain has informed me that I will not be able to go ashore to see Ed. A new order has just been issued from Noumea stating that nobody may go ashore here unless on duty. I ask if I may go over with the sick patients, but the answer is negative.

Refusing to be stumped, I type out a letter for Lt. Bob Laverty of the First Raider Battalion, whom I met the last time ashore. In it I explain my plight and ask him to jeep Ed down from Henderson to see me if it is at all possible. At four o'clock the radio from the beach sends the word, "OK, Laverty."

1830—Ed and he come aboard. Bob has to return immediately but not without a big fritch of bacon, 30 dozen eggs, filet de boeuf, a crate of apples, a box of cigars and a box of Milky Ways. Over the side in the dark he clammers down the net until we meet again. Ed meanwhile digs into a steak with sides of onions, celery, etc. with ice cream for dessert. The meal over, he relaxed in the easy chair in the room and we discussed the folks back home, the good word about our brother making the grade in AA School and the President's speech.²¹² A good night's sleep in a soft mattress and a breakfast of bacon and eggs help to make a new man of Eddie Boy. Unfortunately, he received word that his OCS application was made in a file which is presently overcrowded. However, nothing daunted, he is applying again for the medical administrative end of the business.

SATURDAY, JULY 31, 1943

That his application this time will be successful is the intention of my Mass which Ed served and received for the same intention.

0830—We say goodbye again, grateful for the time spent together when it seemed as though we might

miss out on our connections this trip. I must see that big shot at Noumea who authorized that order.

1500—We receive 250 wounded and casualties aboard. Stories: Jap pillboxes guarding airfield at Munda difficult to take. Casualties very high. Overhead 60 planes take off from Henderson Field. Every two and a half or three minutes a plane soars up from the main field and from the two fighter strips. As they roar over us, they are loaded up with their death-dealing black eggs. There are dive bombers, mediums and escorts of fighter craft.²¹³

What a picture they make, lazy powder puffs of white clouds are drifting across the face of the blue summer sky. The sunlight is sparkling and dancing on a million waves. West of us the sun herself is beginning to slip down the sky as day is about two hours from a close. Into that sun as though they had a rendezvous with it, fly the planes north to Munda and beyond. As they wing their way out, a prayer follows them. "God keep them and please bless them and bring them back safely." Out here the long days of training are over, every trip they make is a matter of life and death. From all their trips some of them do not return.

1730—Underway again for Noumea with our wounded. Many of them neurotic cases, shell shock victims, hands and legs quivering from the effects of bomb blasts and mortars. Others a bit unsettled by the sight of so much bleeding and dying going on around them on every side.

SUNDAY, AUGUST 1, 1943

0630—Mass. 0900—Mass. 1000—General Service.

Wounded, the ambulatory cases, present in large numbers, grateful to God for having spared them for some special reason while their mates and buddies were dying on every side of them. Learn from one

²¹² Roosevelt had spoken in a Fireside Chat on July 28 regarding the fall of Benito Mussolini, progress in Italy and North Africa, and plans for the post-war that would include a "G.I. Bill of Rights."

²¹³ The battle for the airport at Munda Point, for which the American had sorely underestimated the size of the defending Japanese force and the difficulty of the terrain, lasted from July 2 to August 5. Five thousand American troops were killed.

of the sailors that two of the men who were recently members of our ship's company and were transferred to LST's, were killed outright when their ship was torpedoed on the way to Rendova. In our prayers we make a special remembrance of them today.

Some of the wounded cases are pathetic; still dazed expressions on their faces from the horrible experience they have been through recently. In the afternoon we have a small but select group at Rosary and Benediction. Since we have only a handful of passengers aboard, the normal two hundred of them who would be present are conspicuous by their absence.

One of our officers tells me a story about that destroyer, the Renshaw, that we fueled on our previous trip to Guadalcanal. From destroyer flotilla commander came the order, "Run into X anchorage and shell the Munda Airfield." Skipper of Renshaw replied, "According to my charts, sir, X anchorage is mined." "According to mine also, area is mined. Execute orders." "Aye, aye, sir."

She made a run through the mine field at 33 knots per hour, with all her guns blazing away, not knowing whether or not the next second would find her blasted into eternity. Yet she lived to tell of it, with only one transfer the next day for nerves.

MONDAY, AUGUST 2, 1943

0630—Mass after General Quarters.

Wounded and convalescent soldiers of the 150 we have aboard are rapidly becoming themselves again. Many shell shock cases among them. Some come to, to find that soldiers around them were corpses. Have the shakes, no control of their hands. Some have lost power of speech, others stammer and stutter. Even so, decided improvement among them since they boarded us last Saturday. "Casualties heavy?" Infantry officer answered, "Heavy barrage was laid down for half an hour, then dive bombers did their work. When hour broke, men swarmed

forward to the attack, were slaughtered. No impression had been made by the preliminary softening up of planes and artillery on the coral pillboxes built in depth defense. Five hundred yards advance there at Munda is equivalent of five miles on Sicily."²¹⁴

Day is a lovely one, same as yesterday, warm blue cloudless sky with occasional strips of white crowning the mountains on the islands that flank us on either side for a while. Men we are carrying say that the Japs are a resolute and powerful enemy and that their flyers are excellent, almost as good as our own. These boys are mute evidence that this war is one of mechanized might and high explosives in which human bravery and the strength of manhood count for very little against monstrous instruments of destruction.

TUESDAY, AUGUST 3, 1943

0530—General Quarters. 0630—Mass.

Sea is a glassy mill pond this morning. Ships make excellent headway. What ships? The Crescent City, Hunter Liggett, American Legion, Algorab, Libra, and our old friend, the John Penn. Later the John Penn breaks off for Efate in the New Hebrides. The Algorab and the Libra, both cargo ships, slip into Espiritu Santo and we four remaining continue to Noumea.

Day is another delightful one. Passengers have picked up remarkably; good food, a long sleep and rest will bring them back to themselves eventually. Blue on every side of us. Blue of the sky; battle blue of the ships, seven of us; purplish blue of mountains; deep blue of ocean shined up into light marine blue by our propeller; all shades of my favorite color.

Sunset this evening is a quick one. Cloudless blue sky all day at sunset, line of the horizon is razor sharp; sun slips down rapidly creating an optical illusion. Even though she was partly below the horizon, it was still round; suddenly it is gone. Within ten minutes no trace of it. Darkness came

²¹⁴ The fighting for Munda was notable for the 700 men who were removed on account of "battle neuroses."

very quickly; may have seemed quick because there were no clouds to catch the rays below the horizon. In “The Cross of Peace” by Philip Gibbs I come across his description of Armand Batiere’s reaction to the scenes of normal life after he had looked long, yet dry-eyed at the frightful harvesting of war.²¹⁵

He was looking at some youngsters, little girls, playing at crowning a Queen of the May in a field covered with wild flowers. He was surprised to find that his eyes were wet. Why? Because he could only figure that here was a sharp reminder of the happiness and joy of childhood and the boyish memories that contrasted with the bloody memories of his days in the line.

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 4, 1943

0530–General Quarters. 0630–Mass.

Hit a heavy ground swell today for about five hours; we and the other ships rise and fall sharply. As I get up from the breakfast table, almost fall back on the deck when the ship suddenly pitches sharply. Mess Attendant Gore remarks, “Almost came loose from yourself that time, Chaplain.”

Soldier to whom I give an outfit of clothing tells me that he laid in his foxhole for five days and nights without being able to move. Japs controlled position. Didn’t dare sleep at night. One night watching nervously, sensed that something or somebody was out ahead of him. Let forty-odd bullets rip along the front of his foxhole. In the morning about fifteen feet away three dead Japs.

4:30–We slide between the coral reefs guarding the entrance to Noumea. Waves are boiling over them on both sides of us as we single up to the slide around Isle Nou and then to safe anchorage again, thank God. Passengers debark about 5:30. All squatting on a big pontoon barge, fashioned by a Pontoon Assembly

Unit. Are a quiet, subdued group as they sit in their serried lanes. Hope that all will be themselves shortly. A wave of the hand from our men lining the rails and we have said goodbye to another crowd.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 5, 1943

0630–Mass.

Another beautiful day here, after their mild winter; never see [the mountains] blanketed with snow but only rain, and rain, and rain, and more rain. We swing around the buoy expectantly hoping to up the anchor [drop anchor] at any moment but we don’t. I’m sorry that I miss the good Sisters again. Am afraid that I will miss the ship if I go ashore. That would never do.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 6, 1943

Another day like yesterday, both for weather and shoving off. It seems that we have no escort available so we wait and wait. Meanwhile some Gold Braid [senior officer] comes aboard. We are to be the flagship of Admiral [Theodore S.] Wilkinson until his vessel, the Appalachian, now being built in the States, puts in an appearance.

Uh, uh; means that we old timers will be dispossessed and shipped down below to the Main Deck. Gold Braid only will be topside.

In the evening movies as usual, “Roxie Hart,” the picture which does little credit to the author of the story, the producer or the star, Ginger Rogers.²¹⁶

SATURDAY, AUGUST 7, 1943

Scuttlebutt. Was decided at conference of the big shots the other day that we would not go back to the States for some necessary repairs but would go to New Zealand; there to be remodeled at Auckland and, if possible, to have our fouled bottom scraped of all the accumulated growth of the last ten months.

²¹⁵ Gibbs (1877–1962) was a British, Catholic journalist and writer. His *The Cross of Peace* (1931) drew from his experiences as a reporter on the Western Front in WWI.

²¹⁶ Based on “Chicago,” a 1926 stage play about showgirls, murder, and civic corruption, the movie would be revived as a hit Broadway musical in 1975 and an award-winning film in 2002. It is easy to see why Foley didn’t find it to his taste.

1030—We shove off with a destroyer and a President liner cargo ship. We are hitting 17 knots, with the other ship following us.

At 9:30 P.M. I go out topside just in time to catch the crescent moon, about to slip below the rim of the night horizon. The moon is in her lowest quarter, and the moon really is what the poet calls her somewhere, a Ghostly Galleon.²¹⁷ Slowly she slips below the horizon, a perfectly outlined ship until only the tops of her bow and stern are visible, then a dull pale glow marks the spot and black sable-vested night is in complete charge again.

SUNDAY, AUGUST 8, 1943

0600—Mass Upper Deck Shop Area.

0900—Mass Junior Wardroom.

1000—General Service Junior Wardroom. This morning we are no longer three ships together. President liner leaves us to break off for Australia. Destroyer heads back to Noumea. Now we are on our own again. May God be with us as we head for way down under. Just learned at table that tanker that was in our convoy on our last trip to Guadalcanal has been torpedoed. Day is bright with occasional squalls.

MONDAY, AUGUST 9, 1943

General Quarters as usual to start the day when we are alone on the wide open seas. Day passes quietly, though I am putting on the last drive for insurance. Campaign that got started in May ends tomorrow. Having executed over \$300,000 in insurance policies since May, must be at least a million since last year.²¹⁸

We lose an hour today, so that daylight doesn't begin now until about 7:20. Back in the land that is like our own at home.

A lot of remodeling must be done to equip us for the Gold Braid coming aboard. Swinging around

the buoy won't disappoint us at all for a while, then we'll begin to itch to put out to sea again. One bad feature of it all, this new duty means that I won't be seeing Ed for some time. I do hope his application for Officers Training School is acted upon favorably. Ed is beginning to get sick of Guadalcanal. Who can blame him after being on that island since last December? Ducking into foxholes and bombings gets tiresome.

Very rough today. Night is no better. We always, with one exception, have struck bad weather a short distance north of New Zealand. Here are in it again. We roll and pitch all night long until General Quarters. No sleep.

TUESDAY, AUGUST 10, 1943

0600—General Quarters. 0700—Mass.

Sea is a heavy rolling one; wind is strong as we sight the headlands, now familiar, of New Zealand on port side. They are wild and rugged and stern, and the ocean waves are lashing angrily at their feet. We anchor in the stream at 4:30 P.M.

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 11, 1943

0630—Mass.

We move into the dock at Devonport across the Waiamata Harbor, which word in Maori means Placid Water. In the one dry dock is the New Zealand cruiser Leander with a gaping hole amidships port side where Jap torpedo hammered home and killed 28 men. At the time one of the officers counted 31 torpedoes in the water. Two of our vessels were also hit, but not so seriously. One had her bow shot off, the other a small piece of her stern.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 12, 1943

0630—Mass.

Ashore this morning to clean up some odds and ends. In the evening spend some time with Jim

²¹⁷ The traditionalist poet Alfred Noyes (1880-1958) in his popular "The Highwayman" (1906).

²¹⁸ In an interview with Steven O'Brien in 1995, Foley estimated that he had sold \$3 million in insurance policies during his service.

Grant and Jack Convery, both of them Naval Officers living at the Grand Hotel. Visit MOB [Main Operating Base] 4 to see Fr. Riedel, but missed him; also called up MOB 6 where Fr. Minton is, but no reply; both away on business.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 13, 1943

0630–Mass.

Sea gulls here looking for their usual feast. Have beautiful color scheme. Some have white bodies and black wings with a white piping around the borders; others have an all white body and wings, but a black stripe across the tip of their wings.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 14, 1943

0630–Mass.

Work is proceeding apace in the Yard. It seems that we are after all to be the Admiral's temporary flagship and then when he departs, we shall carry the Commodore of our division of ships. Radar equipment to the tune of \$400,000, from Raytheon, Newton, Massachusetts, is being installed aboard. All officers topside except me and the Communications Officer who have been moved below to the Main Deck.

SUNDAY, AUGUST 15, 1943

Mass at 0630 and 0900. Feast of Our Lady's Assumption. Protestant Service in the Yard Chapel.

Today I have been twenty years in the Jesuit Order. Offer up my second Mass in thanksgiving to God for all His blessings of all those years. Later in the morning I visit Fr. Furlong at St. Leo's Church in Devonport. He has been here for 38 years. In the afternoon to Papatoetoe. What a name for a town; Maori as usual.

Then later to Fr. Shore and Fr. Fahey in Otahuhu, who are in charge of the little station chapel that I saw early in the afternoon.

Back to the ship where I find letters from my mother and brother waiting for me.

MONDAY, AUGUST 16, 1943

0630–Mass.

This morning I went over to the USS Relief Hospital ship where I met Fr. Joe Lynch, S.J. He has another chaplain with him, Schonz, to take care of the men of the Protestant faith. It was good to meet both of them again.²¹⁹

TUESDAY, AUGUST 17, 1943

Fr. Furlong's remark in sermon last Sunday, "God never gives suffering for suffering's sake," still sticks with me. How true. He gives us suffering to help us to become saints. "He learned obedience through suffering," as St. Paul says of Our Lord.

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 18, 1943

0630–Mass.

Out to Mobile Hospital #4 to see Fr. Riedel, Chaplain. Dinner with him and then to the boxing bouts there in their recreation hall at 7:30. Interesting two hours watching the lads box, some of them New Zealanders, all the way down to nine years old.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 19, 1943

0630–Mass

Commander Olesen looks at the paper, remarking about the fall of Sicily that it was quick work. Points out the channel three miles wide separating Sardinia from toe of boot where he used to take his ship in the Merchant Marine.

Reflection on the religion of the men. Many experiences serve to prove the basic goodness and deeply religious spirit of all the men and the strong faith and solid piety of our Catholic men.

²¹⁹ Lynch and Schonz had trained with Foley in chaplain school.

A catchy ditty, quoted in a letter home: “While sitting at the table, he needed elbow room. He looked at Dad and said, ‘Say, Mate, rig in your starboard boom.’”

FRIDAY, AUGUST 20, 1943

0630–Mass.

Out this afternoon to Fr. Maurice Hunt’s parish where we visit the Maori College run by the Mill Hill Fathers of England. One of them, a Hollander, remarks that the Japanese just could not exploit the East Indians worse than did his own Dutch. The 18 Maori boys put on a Maori Battalion song and some dances for me. They were quite energetic during their war dance. I thank them at the end and ask for a remembrance in their prayers.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 21, 1943

0630–Mass.

We are still tied up at the Navy Yard dock here in Devonport just across the Waitemata Harbor from Auckland. Workmen are busily engaged in transforming us, putting new equipment aboard, hoisting the cradles for our attack boats, putting in a new fire main to help extinguish the bomb fire that will not start aboard us some day, with the help of God and Our Lady. However, we soberly think of our predecessor, the USS McCawley that went to the bottom a short while ago. May ours not be a like fate.²²⁰

SUNDAY, AUGUST 22, 1943

0630–Mass. 0900–Mass.

Dinner today with Fr. Furlong, pastor of the little church around the corner. His home is located about a fifteen minute walk from the church. It is a lovely spring day. We have good food, good wine and good conversation. He has been here for

42 years, before I was born! In the afternoon to MOB [Main Operating Base] 4 to see Fr. Bob Minton. We have dinner together, then repair to Mechanics Bay for movies, both pictures of the class B type.

MONDAY, AUGUST 23, 1943

0630–Mass. Routine day.

TUESDAY, AUGUST 24, 1943

0630–Mass.

Learn that Crescent City and Hunter Liggett suffered hits recently. There but for a reassignment of orders go we. First it is said that what the John Penn had to do was originally our job. She was sunk. Now our division is plastered with bombs.

Trust that our day of reckoning isn’t merely being postponed, just hope it isn’t on the books at all.²²¹

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 25, 1943

0630–Mass.

In the evening to the boxing matches in the Town Hall where one of our men, Dale Spar, boxes an exhibition match of four rounds with a local boy. Since I have two tickets I take along Ivan Robinson, one of the NZ Air Force who lives 30 miles north of Wellington at Johnsonville. We have a pleasant evening together; fine Catholic boy about 22 years old who was returning home from Canada; accident in his flight training.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 26, 1943

0930–Mass.

Routine day aboard the ship, after securing movie for tonight, “Arise My Love,” with [Claudette] Colbert and [Ray] Milland.²²²

²²⁰ See entry under July 4, 1943. Foley mentions the loss of the McCawley four times in his diary. Like the *Clymer*, she was an attack transport.

²²¹ An attack transport mentioned 20 times in the diary that sailed with the *Clymer* and on which Foley had said Mass many times, the Penn was sunk in an airborne attack on August 13, 1943 while off-loading supplies near Guadalcanal. A list of the dead and their ages, hometowns, and survivors can be found at <https://www.wrecksite.eu/wreck.aspx?107884>. Also, see entry under September 23, 1943.

²²² A 1940 Paramount production that featured Milland as an American pilot who flies for Republican forces during the Spanish Civil War, the film advocated for American intervention in what was then a European conflict. Foley may (continued on page 158)

In the afternoon to Boys' Orphanage run by Sisters. Bring them chocolate bars and hard candies; all glad to get them. Range in age from 2 to 13, fine healthy group of lads who find in the Sisters the motherly affection which has been denied them. They give me a rousing cheer when I leave them.

Later in the evening to Dean Murphy's where I have supper, leave some cigars and cigarettes for him and for Fr. Linehan. On the way home, stop off at theater to see Snow White and Bing Crosby in the Starmaker.²²³

FRIDAY, AUGUST 27, 1943

0630–Mass.

Movie tonight, "They Knew What They Wanted [RKO, 1940]," fine sermon on the remorse that sin breeds.²²⁴

Harding of the 1st Division comes in with Gomez to the office. He is all but bursting into tears. Finds the going rough; wants a transfer to another ship. Is 16 years old; falsified his age to get into the Navy. Boat-swain's Mate, he says, seems to be picking on him. A good piece of cake after he had talked himself out makes up for the chow that he missed.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 28, 1943

0630–Mass.

Fr. Linehan calls that he will ring me on Monday to cook up something for a day's outing.

SUNDAY, AUGUST 29, 1943

0630, 0900–Mass.

No word piped down for bugler is ashore. I visit with the Captain!! What an interview. What a man! Lovely Spring day, like those preceding. We are leaving here at the wrong time. Tomorrow we leave for Wellington where our bottom will be scraped. Walk along the Devonport beach where many folks are strolling along, taking a look at the beach where they will be swimming when summer waltzes in, spring having tripped north again.

MONDAY, AUGUST 30, 1943

0630–Mass.

At 0730 ashore to return movies.

At 1000 underway for Wellington where Eleanor Roosevelt is hibernating. What a woman.

TUESDAY, AUGUST 31, 1943

0630–Mass.

Day is a dull, cold one. Read this today; worth remembering. A quotation from the diary of an American soldier, Martin Treptow, written shortly before he died for his country at Chateau Thierry in 1918, for those flaming words of his should constitute a guiding torch that every red-blooded American should take up and carry with proved determination to victory: "I will work; I will save; I will sacrifice; I will endure; I will fight cheerfully and do my utmost, as if the whole struggle depended on me alone." Quoted by Joseph C. Grew in Introduction to Report from Tokyo: A Message to the American People [Simon & Schuster, 1942].²²⁵

Mr. Mays, Warrant Machinist, when he saw in the Press Release from the Radio Shack [shipboard room

have felt a special appreciation for a scene in which a priest is sent to comfort Milland's character on the eve of his execution. "This is my first execution," the priest confesses. "Don't worry, it's mine too," is Milland's cool response.

²²³ *The Star Maker* (1939) is a wholesome Paramount production in which Crosby plays a would-be song-writer who, with the support of his wife, gives up his job as a clerk and founds a children's chorus.

²²⁴ Foley's approbation is understandable. The plot features Charles Laughton as a well-off vintner whose young wife (Carole Lombard) has an affair with an orchard worker, but who is persuaded, by "Fr. McKee," to take back the remorseful woman and her young child.

²²⁵ Grew had been the US ambassador to Japan when war broke out. Treptow, who Foley must have known was a Catholic, became latterly famous in 1981, when President Ronald Reagan quoted the young private's diary during his first inaugural address, on January 20, 1981.

housing radio communications] about promise of a tremendous offensive in the Pacific, “Halsey is the fightingest man I have ever seen.”²²⁶ Mays is a quiet fellow with a very pleasant disposition who has seen the horrors of war close up. The Lexington went down under him with many of his friends trapped below in her.

Received 30 new books today; clipped jackets and posted them on the forward bulkhead of the Library. Sun goes down in flaming gold, with mountains on starboard side wrapped in haze of light purple. Promises well for tomorrow.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 1, 1943

0546—General Quarters.

0646—Mass.

Clear, crisp day as we head through Cook’s Straits led on by two distant shore lights that look very friendly in the early morning darkness. Anticipate with pleasure seeing Fr. Gascoigne and Miss Eileen Duggan and her friends again: her sister Mrs. Dennehy and Miss McLeely.

0930 — We dock at Wellington, back to our first love. Why? I think that the reason we love Wellington more than Auckland is not that we like the latter less, but because this was the first really civilized place we struck after being up in the Solomons.

I call up Miss Duggan who has just received the first copy of *Commonweal*,²²⁷ to which I subscribed her. When liberty is given, I go ashore and immediately head for Glencoe Court where I have evening meal and then tea about ten o’clock. All sorts of ugly rumors had been heard about my ship, e.g., had been badly torpedoed, etc., all of them utterly without foundation, thank God. Fr. Gascoigne is away on his

holidays without any school worries to bother him, for the youngsters have their six weeks of holidays now.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 2, 1943

0630—Mass.

Ashore at 11 o’clock to arrange for movie, “Tin Pan Alley,” with Jack Oakie.²²⁸ Then to a café where I have a steak. No greens, so I go out to a vegetable store where I buy a head of lettuce and a bunch of celery. Back to the restaurant where they clean them for me and I bore into the steak.

Chaplain Vernon of the Marines introduces himself. He is just in the Navy, fresh from Chaplains’ School. When he leaves, Mrs. Sepia of Wakefield-Nelson, 17 miles by bus, introduces herself with her girl who goes to convent school. Wants me to visit them some time. If I can, will take perhaps a bus trip out there Sunday if we are in that long. Out to the street; overhear two young Marines in conversation. One says to the other, “This reminds me of home.” Main thoroughfare is crowded with thousands of shoppers flowing past in both directions. Note a good sign in a souvenir store window: “Don’t trouble trouble until trouble troubles you.”

Take a Wadestown tram just for the ride and start to make hairpin turns until we have ridden right over the crest of the mountain [Mount Victoria] that commands a marvelous view of the harbor. Can look down and see our ship nosing her way cautiously into dry dock. Scene is breathtaking in its clear, clean beauty. Houses are perched, it seems precariously, on the sides of the mountains all around us. Below are the deep blue waters of the harbor, ringing it are the mountains, the highest wearing clouds and cloudlets on their heads. Off in the distance hugging the shore line a white plume of smoke

²²⁶ Admiral William (Bull) Halsey was commander of the Pacific Fleet.

²²⁷ The American magazine of religion and culture published by lay Catholics and established in 1924.

²²⁸ A 1940 musical by 20th Century-Fox, featuring Betty Grable and Alice Faye as sisters and vaudeville singers, and Oakie and John Wayne as their romantic interests. It received an Academy Award for Best Musical Score. The movie concludes with the male leads returning from WW I to find that Grable and Kaye had been faithfully awaiting their return.

from a fast suburban train floats lazily skyward on the horizon. Behind the crest is a little town in the fold of the hill, Wadestown. Houses as though somebody had set them down by hand.

Back to Miss Duggan's where we leave after tea for a visit to the House of Parliament where I also meet Mr. [Rex] Mason, Minister of Education, and his secretary, Mr. Smith. The latter with a delightfully ironical twist of wit.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 3, 1943

0630—Mass.

Wild, blustery day with rain pouring down. It is blowing from the southwest in sheets, smack into the side of the mountain on whose sides so many houses seem to have such a precarious hold.

Good day to stay on board ship. Every now and then she rocks a bit in her cradle as we watch the full force of the wind sweeping across the harbor.

Read this today by Belloc in book loaned to me by Eileen Duggan: "There is about the Catholic Church something absolute which demands, provokes, necessitates alliance or hostility, friendship or enmity. That truth you find unchangeable throughout the ages, and therefore it is that on the first appearance of the Church, the challenge is already declared."²²⁹

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 4, 1943

0630—Mass.

Day is just as mean as yesterday. No sign of wind abating. One of the dock workers says, "Normally we suffer this weather for three days."

Make arrangements to say Mass aboard the Crescent City and the USS Feland, new arrival from the States just across the dock from us.²³⁰

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 5, 1943

0700—Mass aboard the Crescent City.

0900—Mass aboard the George Clymer.

1000—Mass aboard the USS Feland.

Another day unfit for man or beast to be abroad. Paper says that many new born lambs have succumbed to the wild stormy weather.²³¹ People hug their fireplaces except those who have to be abroad on business. Rain is still smashing relentlessly into the sides of the mountains in back of us. On the shore line, spray is flung high as it crashes on the artificial seawall that protects the narrow gauge railway that skirts the shoreline at the base of the mountains. These mountains are so steep that right in the center of the town just fifty yards off the main street behind one of the department stores is a cable car that pulls folks living up on the precipitous sides to their homes. Weather abates a bit toward 4:30, so I wend my way ashore to spend the evening with Eileen Duggan, her widowed sister, Mrs. Dennehy, and their friend, Miss McLeely. Delightful evening before the open fireplace, talking about literature, the Liturgy and things Catholic with an occasional story about our American boys. Dinner of chicken, mashed potatoes, vegetables and dessert, fresh pineapple and whipped cream.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 1943

0630—Mass.

I make arrangements for tomorrow to pay my movie bills to Fox Films for all the pictures we have been having, the latest, Sun Valley Serenade.²³²

²²⁹ From Hilaire Belloc's *On Patmos*. The borrowed book was most likely *Places: Essays* by Hilaire Belloc (1942).

²³⁰ Like the *Clymer* and *Crescent City*, the *Feland* was an attack transport.

²³¹ Wool was New Zealand's leading export in terms of value.

²³² A 1940 20th Century-Fox musical comedy about a band (Glenn Miller Orchestra), a ski resort (Sun Valley, Utah), a pin-up girl, and an exotic ice skater (Sonja Henie).

Story is that now we are out of dry dock and get underway for Lautoka, Fiji, tomorrow.

Meeting with Mrs. A. C. Scott, 13 Raukau Road, Haitaitai, tel. 55230, whose sister, Nellie, 25, asserts that one of our men has gotten her in trouble. Who is he? Only knows his nickname, Fritz, has a tattoo mark, “Mother,” on right arm and two others on left arm. Wears silver ring with initials FLR. With her to doctor; report no definite signs of pregnancy. Another report in a month. As I shook hands with the doctor, who glared at me, he said in a cutting voice, “Are you the man behind all this?” Would have laughed if the situation was not fraught with possible tragedy.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, 1943
0630–Mass.

A rush down to Fox Films in Courtenay Place to pay the movie bill of one pound for “Sun Valley Serenade” and then at 1000 we are underway once more on a dull, raw day. We swing out around Wellington to travel up the east coast of the North Island. Two Captains aboard, Moen, old, and Talbot, new, until arrival at next destination.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 1943
0630–Mass.

Day is much warmer as we head north. In a few days more we will strike tropical weather again after our month’s sojourn down under.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 1943
0537 – General Quarters again. We are in dangerous submarine waters, so we are once more at our battle stations one hour before dawn. A little chilly this morning as we head directly north. Looks as if it will be a gray, overcast day.

Communications Officer, Lt. Cdr. McRae comes into my room at 11 o’clock to hand me my fitness

report, the last to be submitted by this Captain before he leaves us at Lautoka, Fiji.²³³

11:15–Voice over loudspeaker. “Attention, please. Word has just been received that Italy has surrendered unconditionally to the United Nations and to Soviet Russia.” The silence is suddenly broken by a loud, wild burst of cheering all over the ship and shrill whistling. The first sailor I meet who is chipping rust off the deck remarks, “Well, Father, that’s strike No. 1. Now we’ve got to get the other two.” Receipt of this word merits a fervent prayer of thanksgiving to God and a renewed plea to Him that the end of all fighting will come as quickly as possible.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 1943
0515–General Quarters.

0615–Mass.

2:30–Through reef channel about 20 miles from Lautoka, Fiji. On both sides of us waves breaking over the coral in dazzling blue and white colors.

4:30–Anchor about a mile from the narrow dock. Make arrangements for Mass aboard the USS Sampson, destroyer, for tomorrow.

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 1943
0330–Mass on George Clymer. Since today is loading day, we have to get an early start.

0900–Mass on USS Sampson. Out to her, anchored about two miles away. Mass in crew’s mess hall where it is so hot that sweat just pours from priest and congregation.

3:30–Marist Convent. Sister Fabian and Sister Geraldine, Marist Sisters, who had heard of me from Dick Collins and Chief Callahan of the John Penn, of pious memory, now at bottom. Met Sister Geraldine when she was visiting in chapel.²³⁴

²³³ The “fitness report” is an evaluation document for Navy officers.

²³⁴ The Marist sisters founded a mission school in Levuka in 1892.

6:00—Meet Lt. Tom Keenan who informs me that Jim Collins is now Lt. Colonel in the Medical Corps. Fr. Flaherty is in Suva and Fr. Brock is doing his priestly work up and down the island.

Like last night, the moon is full and when I go out on deck at 10 o'clock to see it, it is straight overhead. Night is one of peace and beauty. Star-filled sky, moon lighting up the ridges of the mountains, all their harsh lines softened by her mellow rays. Water is calm as a mill pond. Not a sound breaks the stillness of the tropical night. We are in a backwater of the world where all the feverish activity of big cities is as unknown as an Eskimo, except through movies.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 1943

0445—Up before dawn for a shave and a shower before leaving the ship to go to destroyer Sampson. Still dark when I reach her, two miles out. Hop aboard, set up altar on the fantail, directly between the after-gun turrets. Altar is framed between the two long rifles, projecting on either side. I hear confessions, facing aft on port side. Sun comes up brilliant gold over the shoulder of the mountains. Men kneel down on the deck, one after another, while I raise my hands in absolution over them.

Mass at 0630 with the skipper of the ship, Lt. Cdr. Flick, whose father is German and mother Irish, giving fine example to his men by kneeling in the first row and receiving Holy Communion.

Back to the ship, then down the gangway to visit the Convent again, where I go through the school with its three castes, European, half-caste and Fijian and Indian. Just a handful of Catholics, perhaps one in six among the boys and girls. School is situated right on the curving shoreline with overhanging palm trees leaning down to the blue water rolling in gently from the sea. In the afternoon Fr. McInnis and Tom Laurence from Elm Street drop in to say hello. Happy to meet another S.J. He leaves with two crates of eggs, a side of beef and six large hams. In turn he hands me a

box of foamite²³⁵ in its cardboard carton and a case of the same.

Troops coming aboard all day. We shove off to anchorage five miles down stream.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 1943

0600—Reveille. No Mass, for I decide to have it this afternoon for the benefit of the passengers. Say my Office early and Rosary also.

Beautiful sunrise from the boat deck forward. We are anchored about two miles off shore of Viti Levu, largest of the 250 islands of the Fijis, of which about 80 are inhabited. Directly off our starboard side is shore with a ridge of mountains rising and falling away to a slope.

Off our starboard side is a cluster of three islands, two small ones, one of fair size. Last has about six mountain peaks. Sun hidden behind the mountains suddenly illuminated the east side of these three islands with lovely bluish purple while their other sides are still dark; color is whitish also. Lovely contrast, blue of the sea, verdant green of the shore and the clean, white blue of the early morning sky overhead. God paints a masterpiece every morning. Higginson, sentry from Washington, remarks about the beauty also.

Underway at 12:30. Mass this afternoon at 2:30; excellent attendance of about 150 men. Inform them of writing letters to their folks if they wish me to do so, letting them know that they have been to Mass and received Holy Communion aboard the ship.

Night is again a warm tropical one with full moon rising slowly and majestically over the rim of the sea, huge as it pokes its head up onto the world; gradually secures a hold and then rises easily and steadily.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 1943

We are ploughing ahead with a mixed crowd aboard. Soldiers and sailors of all sorts and descriptions,

²³⁵ A fire-extinguishing chemical substance.

among them a commando outfit that has volunteered for a particularly dangerous piece of work in Burma. Merrill's Marauders.²³⁶

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 1943

0615—Mass.

Off our starboard side is a task force with the aircraft carrier, Enterprise, two AA cruisers and two destroyers. They are cruising leisurely on an AA run; sleeve is being towed by a plane across the early morning sky. We are sliding between two islands, with ourselves and that task force filling in the gap between. About 1000 we pass a smaller force of the Montpelier, the cruiser that helped to escort us out here, the Denver and two destroyers.

1100—We approach the channel, Espiritu Santo, and about 1130 gingerly pass over the grave of the Coolidge again, feel our way to our anchorage and marvel at the transformation that has been effected since we were here last.

New docks have been built, ships are moored to them, traffic is heavy along the well built roads. There are 18,000 Naval personnel alone on this island and perhaps three times as many Army. Scenery is beautiful as ever, long sloping hills with their coconut groves, lined up in martial array, not one out of line. Sun is blistering hot, as usual.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 1943

0630—Mass.

We note that this channel is choked with shipping, all kinds. Three aircraft carriers, anti-aircraft cruisers, destroyers, escorts, cargo ships, combat transports and the other auxiliary ships needed to fuel and recondition the Navy.

Ashore to purchase some beer tickets for the men and to make arrangements for a recreation party this afternoon at Acre Park, the Fleet Rec. Center here. A hundred men go over there this afternoon for swimming, games, etc.

While waiting for a pickup down to the dock, Dr. Conway from Milton and Bill Wright, Supply Officer from a CB Battalion, rescue me from my stand. Dr. says that at last he caught up with me. He had instructions from Fr. George Murphy to keep his eye out for a Fr. John Foley on a combat transport here in the South Pacific. Had a great chin fest for an hour. Movies at night, boat deck forward.

1000—Conference of Chaplains aboard the Saratoga. Meet [Robert] Metters. [John] Mitchell, [John] Sheehy, etc.²³⁷ What a large ship. 3200 men aboard her, 2 Chaplains, Sheehy and Minister Cole.

Tremendous length of flight deck, like a football field. Meeting in ready room. Board gives all necessary information to the pilots about to take off, e.g. nearest land-bearing district, nearest airfield-bearing district, alternate field-bearing district, return to carrier by 12 degrees.

Grumman planes, scouts, dive bombers, torpedoes, etc. Amazing arsenal; hanger deck with tremendous elevators.

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 1943

0630—Mass, Clymer.

0900—Mass, Clymer

1015—Mass, USS Cleveland, Chaplain Bob Metters.

2:00 P.M.—Dance Orchestra aboard for an hour's concert.

4:00 P.M.—Rosary and Benediction

5:30 P.M.—Confessions

6:30 P.M.—Movies

²³⁶ The Marauders—formally known as 5307th Composite Unit (Provisional) and named for their commander Brig. Gen. Frank D. Merrill—comprised some 3,000 volunteers who fought behind enemy lines in the Burmese jungle. Following their five-month, 750-mile campaign, only 150 remained “combat effective.” Their story would become the subject of a book and a 1962 film.

²³⁷ Fellow students at the Norfolk Chaplains School,

Met Chaplain Ben Brown yesterday, toured the island for an hour, then visited his air strip. Met youngster, Baker, redhead from Tennessee, who took a passenger's hop with Navy pilot and radio man. Crashed into mountain; he, the only survivor, made beach from crash after six days, picked up, now 54 pounds lighter. Was lost for 43 days after crash into the jungle here on Espiritu Santo. USS Souflee sank a sub a few nights ago that had sunk four ships in two weeks. Sowed four patterns of depth charges. When Tojo's boys were forced to surface, they were smashed to Kingdom Come.

9:10 P.M.—Sitting in my room when ship shivered two or three times as though we were dragging anchor. Everybody rushed topside, bearings were taken, soundings also. Hadn't moved a foot. Report came that a slight earthquake caused the shivers. So we have shivered with an earthquake even on water.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 1943

0450—General Quarters.

0600—Mass, with excellent attendance. Am writing about 125 letters to parents of men informing them that they have attended Mass and received Holy Communion.

Underway at 1000. We swing out through the mined channel alone, with no escort, but outside we pick up five other ships and five destroyers. Since the Nips²³⁸ have been prodigal with their torpedoes in this area of late, we have the maximum protection, more than we have ever had before.

Ships in convoy: USS Typhon, Crescent City, Mormacrom, Carlson and the Alcheeba.²³⁹ Last was torpedoed twice last November, but is still sailing the ocean.

Five destroyers: DeLevy, 162; Phelps, 498; McCall, 488; Bennett, 473; Sampson, 394.²⁴⁰

Lovely sight as we steam ahead, riot of blues all around us. Some of the shades: cobalt sky above, deep blue of the Pacific, battle blue of the ships to blend with the ocean, light marine blue of our wake, the deep purplish blue of the heavily wooded islands on our port and starboard and a sullen, blackish blue on some thunderheads on our port side, where we hear the distant rumble of the ninepins. Overhead blistering tropical sun shining down on us.

No alarms or excursions as yet on the trip. Learn that 93 men were lost aboard the USS John Penn when she was torpedoed last month at Guadalcanal, as yet unannounced, because the Japs don't know whether she was sunk or not, unlike the Macauley that they saw go down.

First day of Fall back home, but we sweat like stuck pigs out here. This trip is the worst yet for heat. One reason, wind is a tail one; doesn't clear ship during the day as head-on one always does. Holds stuffed with troops, smell heavily of human bodies. These boys give up a lot of comforts and the little but better things of life every day in this war, yet never complain.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 1943

0500—Mass.

0600—Mass. Last one for these men, one of whom is cousin of Fr. Pat Cummings of Holy Cross. Caught just before Communion by rain, finish Mass, then distribute Holy Communion forward.

0700—Guadalcanal on our starboard again. Passengers are all crowding the rails to glimpse the most famous of this group.

²³⁸ From Nippon, a Japanese word for Japan, and a derogatory term.

²³⁹ The editors can find no record of a USS *Typhon* prior to 1944. Nor is there any record of the *Mormacrom* or *Moracuron*—as Foley had it in his May 13, 1943 entry. The *Mormacgull* was a small cargo ship and the *Morachawk* was a cargo and combat ship. The latter is known to have served in the South Pacific. The *Carlson* was a destroyer, and the *Alcheeba* was an attack transport.

²⁴⁰ The editors can find no record of a USS *DeLevy*.

1130—Over the side and down the net to thumb a ride in a jeep to Ed, “Long time no see.” Out to the ship with his three mates for dinner of steak and all the fixin’s; aboard for four hours, then back to the tent where he lives. Letter to our mother, trying to recapture some of the happiness of these visits so that she may share it by proxy.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 1943

0445—Reveille.
0600—Mass.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 1943

0450—General Quarters.
0600—Mass.

Day is almost unbearably warm, blistering sun beating down on us. Last trip up to Guadalcanal was about the hottest of the ten. Reason? A favoring tail wind that didn’t benefit the ship at all.

Communique day’s news. “John Penn sunk while returning to Guadalcanal from an advanced base.” Why this report about the location of the sinking? She was sunk right at Guadalcanal at anchor. Effort to save somebody’s face?

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 1943

0450—General Quarters.

0600—Mass.

Lovely day, a bit cooler as we slide along down the slot away from hot steaming Guadalcanal. With us the USS Margaret Fuller and the Island Mail. Our speed, 16 knots. General Quarters each night for an hour after sunset which, as usual, is beautiful this evening.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 1943

0442—General Quarters. Getting up earlier every morning! We never get used to it!

0600—Mass.

Island Mail leaves us to slip into Efate while we slide around the end of the New Hebrides after travelling through the famed Coral Sea, where Commander Shea met his death aboard the Wasp.²⁴¹

High over the smoke stack one radar is operating, the whiskers twitching, feeling tentatively for any craft that may be on the surface or up in the sky. The other radar, the coffee grinder, so called because of its whirring noise, is silent atop the searchlight deck, topmost deck of the ship.

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 1943

0432—Rise and shine for General Quarters.

0530—Mass. 0900—Mass. 1000—General Service.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 1943

0445—General Quarters.

0600—Mass.

Overhead even early, dive bombers, our own, shrieking down with their high-pitched, down-scale whistle as they lay into us and then peel off and up and over and then into us again. Anchor about 1000 at Noumea, then ashore to get a movie, “Stage Door Canteen.”²⁴²

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 1943

Amos, Mess Attendant, catches 18 pound fish off the fantail, like a big mackerel. Javins hooks a 12 pounder. Have fish for supper; meat of it is delicious and snow white. They start a fad. We are anchored in Dumbea Bay. Fish in abundance, for all who throw a line over the side catch something.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 1943

0630—Mass.

²⁴¹ See note under March 4, 1943.

²⁴² A 1943 United Artists release with appearances by nearly 70 Broadway and movie actors who serve food and entertain in the legendary club for servicemen in a basement in New York City’s theater district.

Ashore in morning for movie. Meet Fr. MacDonald and spend the day with him at MOB [Main Operating Base] 7. Lovely setup. Native grass compound, huts constructed of dried palm branches and reeds.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 30, 1943

0630–Mass.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 1, 1943

0630–First Friday Mass.

Ashore with John Manoski and Marvin Irving Metzger where I baptize Metzger in the Cathedral, St. Joseph's of Noumea. He is a very happy boy. Later we purchase some lithographs of the Cathedral.

Meet Fr. Foley of the Jackson with Cdr. "Pug" Crawford, former Gunnery Officer aboard our ship. Word from the Crescent City for Mass Sunday.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 2, 1943

0630–Mass. Metzger makes his First Communion. "Happy beyond words," he tells me. "Happiest day of my life. Will my wife be happy, too?"²⁴³

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 3, 1943

0630–Mass.

0900–Mass aboard the Crescent City.

Afternoon return movie to exchange. Javanese parading around the town in the coconut park. Do they love colors. Men and women dress in the colors of the rainbow, e.g. one little tacker about 2½ years old toddling along with a firm grasp of mother's green skirt, is wearing a blazing orange little blouse, green long trousers, and a white straw hat. A native woman of gargantuan size sails majestically by, rigged out in a Mother Hubbard dress that is a light blue with a white border around it. Our military men do some serious thinking. They are puzzled. They wonder what kind of deal they

are getting out of life. Sometimes they feel that they have been let down badly. Those who are old enough remember the farce of Prohibition days and what excesses it led to. All of them are old enough to have suffered through the depression of the early Thirties. And now they have to go to war. Feel that there must be a reason for the handicaps that have dogged their footsteps. Are bound, as far as they are concerned, it won't happen again.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 4, 1943

0630–Mass.

Our boys will be mission-minded after this war. In fact, they are now. They now realize as they never did before, the universality of the Church. At the Communion rail, native Solomon Islander, Fijian; beside him a native priest, black as the ace of spades. They have seen priests and Sisters from New England and other parts of the country putting their sickle into the harvest. They have seen the remains of churches destroyed by the fortunes of war, work of years gone in a second. The word mission is no longer a foreign word to them. It is home, even if only temporarily. Tremendous respect for the missionaries. If they don't get to heaven, no hope for the rest of us. What they have given up and what they received in exchange for their sacrifice! We think it is tough for a few months; they have been here for years, 15, 30, 36, 44. They will carry their memories back with them to civilian life. Instead of giving a dime, they will give paper. Collections, \$10 and \$20 bills, several thousand to Bishop [Jean M.] Aubin and Bishop [Thomas J.] Wade here 20 years, 14 of them as Bishop; spontaneous collection.

Tarpaulin collection for refugees we carried during the Holy Week. Generosity of Chief Callaghan of the USS John Penn, "The \$100 Chief," as the Sisters in Fiji, Latoka called him. The two Sisters from England, New Zealand and from Ireland.

²⁴³ Apparently, yes. Metzger, a Nebraska native, returned to his wife Helen after the war. A successful rancher and noted horseman, he died in 2011, leaving six children, 25 grandchildren, and 19 great-grandchildren, according to his newspaper obituary.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 5, 1943

I am a wholesale liquor dealer, purchasing 600 cases of beer for use at our future recreation parties. Spend day at Ducos Peninsula [Noumea]. Mr. McLanahan arranges the necessary deal; price \$1.55 a case of 24 bottles.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 6, 1943

Movie exchange.

Mass at 3:00 at which I tell the 1500 passengers about daily Mass.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 7, 1943

0630—Mass.

Underway for Guadalcanal with all our passengers, among whom is Bob Power, B.C. '41 from Waltham and a medical outfit that has at least one-third Catholic officers among its personnel. Hear confessions at night.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 8, 1943

Uneventful; following usual routine.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 9, 1943

Today it begins again, i.e. the heat to close in on us.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 10, 1943

0423—General Quarters.

0600—Mass. 0900—Mass. 1000—General Service.

1500—Rosary and Benediction.

Excellent attendance at all the exercises, even though the men are preparing to unload the ship tomorrow.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 11, 1943

0630—Mass.

Over the side and down the net to see Ed who is 20 miles away, for we are anchored at Tassaferonga, just south of Cape Esperance. Captain Ellis, Medical

Officer, gives me a jeep to take me down; have ten minutes with Ed who informs me that tomorrow or the next day he leaves by plane for New Caledonia, 109th Station Hospital, APO 502. He is as happy as a lark to be moving out after being marooned here since last December.

Back to the ship, passing hundreds of mules and horses that should shortly see action. Through a river about three feet deep, about 20 yards wide as its bridge is being repaired.

On the way to Henderson Field this morning, we passed a Liberty ship burning furiously in the number three hold. We learn that she was one of two hit this morning at 0400. Now this evening she is still a bonfire. Her cargo consisted of gasoline in drums! Ed remarked the thunder that they heard last night. Jap planes blasted them again.

Last Saturday in the morning the gunners had AA practice with live ammunition. Star shells were shot into the sky. Even in the bright sunlight they stood out brilliantly. Down they floated slowly for about 30 seconds after the shell carrying them exploded. First, three-inch guns emitted their dull roar, the angry lick of orange flame leaped from their mouths and their big shells exploded around the star shell. Then the chattering of the 20 mm began. Some of the marksmanship was good, some of it was poor, e.g. the shells exploding behind the star.

We lift anchor about 6 P.M. to cruise round all night lest the same fate happen to us as happened to the two Liberty ships last night, both torpedoed. All four of us, the three President ships and ourselves run Indian file, ahead of a sharp black silhouette and astern the same. Overhead a most unfriendly full moon that is the bosom friend of bombers. Orders from the beach are, "Shoot down any and all aircraft within a radius of 40 miles. Our planes all grounded tonight." Everybody nervous after last night's raid; too successful.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 12, 1943

Columbus Day back home, but not out here.

0445–General Quarters. 0600–Mass.

We steam back after running around for about 100 miles. Still a blazing pyre is the Liberty ship, 26 hours after she was hit. We speak of 24 hours as a long time, yet Hell burns forever! A toothache lasting for five minutes seems interminable, etc. Out we steam at night to be on the safe side.

Standing in the forward boat deck right after dinner when Army transport plane takes off from Henderson. Can it be that Ed is aboard her? Must ask him in the next letter. Wonder if he could recognize us below?

Aboard the destroyer, USS Buchanan, lashed to us for fueling, for confessions at 3 o'clock when General Quarters goes – dee-dee-dee-dee-me-me-me-me-me-do-sol-sol-sol-me- as quickly as the bugler can play. Officer aboard breaks into my stateroom; informs me that General Quarters is on.

I rush out with habit in one hand, cincture in the other, stuff them and stole into my budge, inside shirt, then up the rope net on side of Clymer, into our sick bay, losing on the way my cincture and stole. Destroyer casts off all lines. We are both underway. General Quarters is over in 15 minutes and I start retracing my steps to find cincture and stole, succeed, then aboard the Buchanan for more confessions. This time uninterrupted to the end.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 13, 1943

0445–General Quarters. 0600 – Mass.

0800–Aboard USS Tracy, mine sweeper, for confessions. Afterwards into the wardroom for a glass of fruit juice when General Quarters goes again; once more out and clamber up the ladder alongside of our boom, monkey style. If I slipped, it would be a 30 foot splash into the drink.

Loading 2nd [Marine] Raiders aboard for maneuvers. [Co. Evan] Carlson's men! Makin veterans.²⁴⁴

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 14, 1943

0453–General Quarters. One of the men of the beach party told me an amusing story today. A new man, a boat-hook fresh from the States five weeks ago, had his first air raid alarm two nights ago. He was on the beach at the time, worried sick. He heard some CB yell, "Make for the woods!" So he ran as far as his legs could carry him; in fact, till he came out of the other side of the woods. Then he decided that the only thing to do was to go back to the boat, which he did and found the old experienced coxswain, sleeping by his wheel.

12:10–General Quarters; unidentified plane.

3:30–Mass, with attendance of about 35; very good for the first afternoon.

4:10–General Quarters; that makes the third time today. This is getting monotonous! Will the enemy ever take a rest?

6:00–"General Quarters. All hands darken ship. The smoking lamp is out on the weather decks; no white clothing will be worn topside, keep silence about the decks." This goes over the loudspeaker every night just before General Quarters.

"Sweepers, man your brooms. Clean sweep down fore and aft." These poor men travelling aboard a ship. They sweat, they smell, they suffer.

This evening full moon over our port side. As Mr. Townsend and I stand on starboard, can clearly see the silhouette of the ship outlined on the foam tossed back from our flanks. A beautiful sight as shadow moves along speedily, a perfect outline of our shape. A beautiful night above, but a bad one for us. The subs can now get us between themselves and the moon and then we make a perfect target.

²⁴⁴ On August 17, 1942, Marines took Makin Atoll, one of the Gilbert islands, in a night raid launched from two submarines. The Japanese returned in force and would be driven off the island by Army and Navy Forces in a costly battle that ran from November 20-24, 1943.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 15, 1943

0423—General Quarters. 0600—Mass.

Today I learn that our next operation is against Bougainville. These Marines we have aboard are to go secure the beachhead, hold it for two weeks until the Army takes over. Presently it seems the Der Tag [the day] is November 3rd.²⁴⁵

We are going on maneuvers at Vila Bay at Efate, one of the New Hebrides Islands. About the ship men are cleaning their rifles as they haven't cleaned them for months, say the officers. I see a young officer with a cluster of 20 of his men around him, listening intently to something he is telling them. He is liked by them. He is a tall, sandy-complexioned fellow about 25 years old. Most of his men are 18 to 20.

Dog Platoon! Up forward on the port side is the strangest cargo that we have carried yet, 24 dogs, that are scouts and messengers. They are all Doberman Pinchers with the exception of four German Shepherds. They should do valiant work in Bougainville.²⁴⁶

This day like all others recently is blistering hot. Sun is beating down from a blue, cloudless sky. One of the Marine officers informs me that Bougainville has eight airstrips that must be neutralized to assure us of escaping from the Jap bombers. They will be softened up for days prior to the push.

We drop about 8 A.M. in the harbor of Vila, Efate Island, a lovely South Seas place with deep blue and purple and light marine blue waters all around us. Vendors come gliding out in their outrigger canoes selling their coconuts and their grass skirts for “un dollar” to the boys left aboard while their mates are

on maneuvers on the other side of this little island that is just off our port side.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 16, 1943

0600—Mass.

Men go out in boats at 0800 for maneuvers, steaming for the enemy-held beach which is 4200 yards away, just about 6 nautical miles. They are laden with their combat gear.

We are located in a semi-circular harbor which has an island in it on the sea side of arc. It is the kind of South Seas island that you read about. The water where we are anchored is the Pacific blue; 600 yards in, close to shore, where the white coral is the bottom, the water is the lightest of light blue, turquoise; then there is the white sandy beach fringing the shore and leaning down over the water's edge the fronds of the coconut trees. Hid in beneath them are the huts of the natives, swarthy blacks. They are trying to barter their goods, grass skirts for money and clothing. Learn today purpose of making beachhead at Bougainville: to secure sites for airstrips to neutralize Robaul, enemy stronghold in New Britain, Naval Base particularly, and staging area for the Solomons. Purpose was put inelegantly by a Marine Commanding Officer, “To secure that lousy piece of real estate so that we can get the hell off it.”

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 17, 1943

0515—Reveille.

0530—Mass with Fr. Camler, celebrant.

0630—Mass with self as celebrant, with two parties from destroyers attending.

6:45 P.M.—Mass for those who missed this morning.

²⁴⁵ The battle for Bougainville, the largest and northernmost of the Solomon Islands, would not go as easily as Foley imagined or had been told. The Marines Foley referred to would not be replaced until December 15, and while American forces moved on to the north after airfields were constructed, the island would remain a battle zone until the war ended, the action eventually engaging 174,000 American and Australian troops.

²⁴⁶ The First Marine War Dog Platoon brought messenger and scout dogs to Bougainville. The dogs were reported to have worked well in the field and were later utilized in other Marine engagements in the Pacific. <https://www.historynet.com/a-few-good-marines-dogs-in-wartime.htm>

One boy came to me this afternoon who was desperately homesick. He sat down and we talked, i.e. he did most of the talking. When we were parting, he remarked, “Father, did I feel good when I heard that there was a priest aboard.” He is worried sick about the invasion that is ahead. Learned this afternoon the D-Day is the Feast of All Saints. If we are to die, good day to go home to heaven.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 18, 1943

0615–Mass.

Ashore in the morning where I met Fr. Sculley, secular, from Westport [Massachusetts], who used to go to Keyser Island²⁴⁷ frequently. Town has a lovely church and a convent staffed by Marists. All of them are French with the exception of Fr. Libelle, an American who was on Bougainville, but skipped the clutches of the Japs by evacuating on a submarine.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 19, 1943

1:15–Reveille.

1:30–Breakfast for the troops and crew.

2:30–Breakfast for the Officers.

0330–Set condition 1:A.²⁴⁸

0345–Man all boats.

0400–Lower all boats.

0433–First wave; first section leaves rendezvous circle for the beach.

0439–Second section, first wave leaves.

0448–Second wave leaves.

0453–Second section of second wave leaves, etc.

Beach being assaulted. At daylight we are viciously strafed on dry run by our own dive bombers; then following them, the torpedo planes roar in, shrieking, to deliver their fish into us. Blinding speed and descending, they head in the ascending whine, as they climb out after their operation, makes the practice all too real. Officer from recently torpedoed and sunk John Penn is extremely nervous, “I don’t like that kind of music,”

he says with a wry smile. We are “sunk” by five of our bombers that spilled out of bank of white clouds.

I wrote my final letter to Sister Flavius to be given to my mother in case anything happens to me.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 20, 1943

0600–Mass aboard the USS Anthony with USS Wordsworth men also aboard at gun turret in foc’sle. White sunrise, white sky, sun shining in full glory on Host and Chalice, blinding me as I turn around for “Dominus vobiscum.”

Messer, always knelt down morning and night for prayer, says mate asked another sailor, “I don’t know how to pray; will you say a couple for me?”

Movie: Men of Boys Town, with Spencer Tracy. No hint of spiritual life of the institution, of Mass or other exercises.²⁴⁹

Admiral Halsey comes aboard at 3:30, a man of 63 years, slim build, who looks his years, weather-lined face, of an officer carrying tremendous responsibilities. Gold Braid conference on impending battle, going over battle plans.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 21, 1943

0600–Mass.

Marines return from their maneuvers that they enjoyed. Our ship receiving a commendation from the CONTRANS GR for speed in unloading. First time he has ever complimented a transport in the SOPAC [South Pacific Fleet]. Fr. Foley from Philadelphia comes aboard from the USS Jackson. Also one priest at least aboard each transport in our attack division.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 22, 1943

We are underway at 4:30 P.M. The thickly-forested mountains all around Vila and her environs slip away onto the horizon and we are headed for our

²⁴⁷ A Jesuit vacation house and retreat center in Connecticut.

²⁴⁸ Condition 1 is Navy jargon for general quarters; Condition 1A calls for all personnel responsible for a safe embarkation to be in place.

²⁴⁹ A sequel to the popular *Boys Town* (1938), the MGM film starred Spencer Tracy (Fr. Flanagan) and Mickey Rooney and was one of the most popular movies of 1941. That it featured no Mass or “other exercises” was likely one of the reasons for its wide popularity.

next destination, so much nearer the day of attack. Flag officers leave us for the Hunter Liggett, which has just arrived for her maneuvers with the Crescent City, the American Legion and the Margaret Fuller.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 23, 1943

0418—General Quarters.

0615—Mass, Upper Deck shop area.

We steam along under a lovely blue sky in company with the Presidents Hayes, Adams, Jackson, bound for Pakkelulo Bay, 20 miles north of the usual anchoring place at Espiritu Santo. Bay is a channel between a small island standing out to sea and the main island of Espiritu Santo.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 24, 1943

0615—Mass. 0900—Mass. 1530—Rosary and Benediction.

Recreation parties are organized to relieve the pre-battle strain for both the 2nd Raider Marines we are carrying and our own crew. All realize the exceptionally dangerous nature of the mission we are embarked upon. The more they have to take their minds off it, the better they will be the moment of strife and stress arrives.

The dog platoon goes ashore also for some tactical exercises. I should hate to meet these dogs unleashed. They scared the life out of me the other night when I had to go by them in the dark. In their pens topside one started to bark viciously at me. The others joined in the chorus and made the night wild with savage snarling.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 25, 1943

0615—Mass.

Still anchored here in Pallkulo Bay with swimming parties going ashore to the island on our starboard side both morning and afternoon to help relieve the tension of the men who will shortly be engaged in battle.

Overhead this afternoon 18 torpedo planes circle in squadrons of three sixes, describing a circle of about five miles. A Marine looks up and says to the man beside him, “Brother, I hope they put layer after layer of those birds over us at Bougainville.”

Latest song hit: “Don’t Sit Under the Coconut Tree with Anyone Anytime, and I Ain’t Fooling You.”

Jewish boy visits me in the office, asking me to see his friend, Nick, another dog handler who has not gone to church since he ran away from home when he was 14. “Father, he is 18 now and I know that he is unhappy because he is not doing the right thing.” Straighten him out with confession and Communion. Jewish boy, 17, overjoyed when he meets me. “Nick’s a new guy.”

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 26, 1943

0615—Mass.

We are told at Quarters today that there will be a simulated bombing attack at 0915 this morning. At 0815 the planes start taking off from the field on the south side of the channel. They take off with a clock-like regularity for 30 minutes, one every few seconds. They come roaring out over our heads, one after another head out to their rendezvous area, the dive bombers and the torpedo planes. They wheel into formations. High above over us majestically speeds along a squadron of 18 torpedo bombers. What a beautiful picture they make against the clear blue morning sky. Then they disappear below the horizon.

At 0910 General Quarters alarm is piped down, “All hands to General Quarters.” Peep-Peep-Peep all battle stations are manned. Since this is only a dry run, I go to the flying bridge deck to watch the show. Suddenly as from nowhere, torpedo planes are skimming over the surface of the water. As they get within 100 yards of us, they open their torpedo bays, then swing up over us. The roar is deafening and frightening. Everywhere, from every side they come in on us. The gunners are training the guns on one plane when another is on top of them. Then

suddenly there is a whine straight over ahead; no, it is a few hundred yards away. Six dive bombers are plummeting straight down on us, with a zing-zing noise that makes us happy that they are our own. As they drop their eggs, dry run, they zoom up and over us, vapor streaking from their wing tips. There is a lull for about ten minutes, then the fighters, strafing the gun crews, come in over the low hill straight for the ships. We are all being sunk, the four of us. The other three are the President ships. We automatically duck as we think they are going to crash into us, then they gun her up and away they have gone. For one hour intermittently, these attacks go on. When they are over, we know what to expect when D day arrives next Monday. We learn also from scuttlebutt that we are to have 18 destroyers and 6 battle wagons, plus four aircraft carriers with us, meaning 8 attack transports and four cargo ships.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 27, 1943

0615–Mass.

Swimming party as usual both morning and afternoon at the little island that lies off our port side. I take it in the afternoon. The sand is yellowish-white, amazingly fine, the finest I have ever seen. It is of that color and fineness due to it being coral originally but washed away by the sea. There are about 500 of us swimming in this man's paradise.

To see the Marines and sailors making human pyramids on the beach and then tumbling the apex man into the water, to see them chasing each other up and down the beach, one would never think that within five days these men will be locked in mortal combat with the enemy. While I'm floating lazily on my back looking up at God's blue sky, I catch a glimpse of four planes about two miles up. They put on a show for my pleasure. They flip over and over, turn on their backs, sweep down and up while I lazily take it in with my head cradled in my hands. A short distance down, the 44th CB's are working with a couple of bulldozers, tearing down the jungle primeval to make the land clear for a recreation park for the men of the fleet and the shore stations who will be stationed nearby.

A further distance down in the stream a floating dry dock is being slowly built. Judging from the long term preparations being made here, the brass hats expect the war out here to last for a long time.

One Marine reads to his mates a joke from a magazine. Colored soldier in England playing poker. Picks up four aces. One of the Englishmen bids a pound on his very good hand. Colored boy, "I don't know what you use for money over here, but I'll bet a ton!"

I notice that as day for attack approaches, all of us become sensitive to the simplest experiences. Things that we have been taking for granted have their attractiveness infinitely enhanced by the thought that we may be looking on them for the last time. The sun over head, its rays slanting down on the ocean, the intense blue of the water, the green of the trees. What if I should be blinded like that soldier McMullan. All these impressions stored in the memory, with almost conscious effort to freeze them for use.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 28, 1943

0615–Mass.

This morning there is another swimming party over to the small island on our port side. This will be the last one for quite some time. The plan of the day has us shoving off at four this afternoon.

1600–We are off on the big adventure to pick up Admiral Wilkinson at Guadalcanal, then on to Bougainville which we attack on Monday, All Saints Day. Men are glad to be on the way. There is an attitude of expectancy but at the same time, one of relief, for the long months of preparation and training and monotonous maneuvers are over for these Marines. Now they are about to go into the real battle operation. With them is also a group of CB's whose job it is to build as quickly as possible an airport for immediate use. Two weeks is the time they have been allotted to have it built and planes taking off from it. "Can't be done? We'll do it!" typifies their spirit.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 29, 1943

0600–Mass.

Around the ship junior officers are holding meetings with their men clustered around them, telling them the details of the coming operation. I listen in on one, who is instructing his men that when they take prisoners, to separate the men from the officers immediately, for the men have been known to “sing” when the separation has been effected immediately. Another Lt. tells his men not to shoot everybody and anybody out in front, for it may be a friendly patrol.

The men are cleaning their rifles, oiling the machine gun parts, straightening the clips of bullets so they feed into the gun smoothly. Others are sharpening their trench knives on the pocket whetstones.

One Marine down in the galley tells me that “It is the third time for me, Father. Boy, how I sweat as I crouch in that boat waiting to hit the beach. I lose ten pounds on each trip.” Col. Shapely informs men over the PA system of the coming operation: “Bougainville is the place, Monday is the day, coverage air and sea; battlewagons, carriers, cruisers, destroyers, and planes. Also destroyer escorts and mine sweepers. Operation will be preceded by a barrage laid down on the beach. It will be a tough job. That’s why they picked the Marines to do it.”

Regret: No mention of God in this whole talk except as an expletive. “For God’s sake, don’t get trigger happy.”

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 30, 1943

0600–Mass.

We drop hook at 4 P.M. off Lunga Point where we pick up Admiral Wilkinson and General Vandergift and Air General Harris and staff, among them Captain Sullivan, formerly of the *Crescent City*. Also 200 more Marines who will sleep on the deck. Learn that cargo ships have gone ahead of us; also four other attack transports. Underway for the attack

point at 0900. Fr. Camler and I hear confessions for hours.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 31, 1943

Feast of Christ the King.

0600–Mass. 0900–Mass.

1000–Chaplain McCorkle’s Service.

At five-thirty I count four cruisers and 14 destroyers with us, not to mention sundry destroyer escorts and mine sweepers, a total of 36. Also pass ten landing craft. The LST’s²⁵⁰ have barrage balloons tied to their top deck to drive off attacking planes. They move very slowly.

0830–High overhead are black specks, 16 of them, patrolling “among the sun-split clouds, high in the sunlight-silence, topping the windswept heights with easy grace.”

We hear them before we are able to see them. Over the TBS, “Bogie overhead,” i.e. Jap plane. May be high altitude reconnaissance plane. Later P 38 knocks him down. We are twelve ships in the convoy at this hour when I’m typing. It is now 11 o’clock and we are just off New Georgia Islands, hoping Japs haven’t spotted us.

At 1 o’clock I count 24 destroyers, two for each [transport] ship. Also a couple of ocean-going tugs in case any of the vessels run into trouble, going aground, etc. Learn that our code name is DESTINY. Other ships in our column with names, Barber, Half-Moon, Palmer, etc.

One of the Australians aboard remarks, “I wouldn’t miss this bloody mix for all the tea in China.”

3 P.M.—Rosary and Benediction and Consecration to the Sacred Heart. Confessions in the evening with Fr. Camler.

²⁵⁰ Tank Landing Ships.

6 P.M.—Twenty planes fly overhead as we head into the lion’s jaws. Tomorrow morning the DAY! I hear confessions till almost midnight.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 1, 1943

Feast of All Saints.

Bougainville.

The very first thing to do before putting down a single line about this day is to speak a fervent “Thank You” to God for having brought us safely through this historic day. Today we attacked Bougainville, west side, Empress Augusta Bay.

0315—Reveille. I distributed Holy Communion as Viaticum for 25 minutes immediately after Reveille to these boys who would be in battle shortly. Breakfast following immediately for them, while I offered the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

0550—All boats were hoisted to the rail as we made out in the dark the outlines of high mountains ashore. I go out on deck at 5:15, no moon shining down, only a star sending its peaceful beams down on a scene that will shortly find all hell breaking loose over it. We are nosing cautiously into a big U-shaped bay.

One minute after six, word is passed over the TBS²⁵¹, “Stand by to synchronize watches.” All ships in the attack, the cruisers, destroyers and the rest of us are now on exactly the same second.

A couple of minutes later the destroyers open up a terrific bombardment on the shore. The sun is reddening the east directly behind the mountains on our starboard side as we swing into the shoreline. It is a morning made in heaven and man is making it a hell. We see the angry flames leap from the mouth of the guns of the destroyers and then 14 seconds later, timed by one of the sailors, we get the noise of the explosion from the guns. What happens on shore we don’t hear, but we see earth thrown up and then lazy smoke drifting skyward. Three planes high up, ours. They are spotting the

fire for the destroyers that are aiming to knock out anti-aircraft and shore batteries of this rugged terrain. Jungle seems to come right down to the shore. Mountain rises thousands of feet about five miles inland.

0615—Glorious sunrise. 0616—Crescent City, the first one to make the turn broadside to the beach, lets go with all her port guns, 20 mm and three-inchers. Tracers spurt out angrily from former to shore. Can see them ricochet off the water onto the beach. Meanwhile in the background is a cone-shaped mountain [Mt. Baranga] that resembles a lazy active volcano, for it has a big veil of white cloud spiraling slowly heavenward from her top.

0620—Destroyers angrily sending salvo after salvo into the beach, way in, rather than on the beach, and the thunder reverberates in the valleys and hills. Boats in water.

0650—Communion to Captain Sullivan of the Admiral’s staff.

0713—Five dive bombers fly high in formation, our own, until they are just directly over the approach to the beach when they let go their messages, black messages of death that we can see hurtling earthward, then a tremendous explosion that we can feel, even three miles off shore, and they are away again.

0720—Six destroyers astern open up in bombardment again on the shore. Makes me skip a few breaths. Glad to be on the giving and not the receiving end.

0721—We swing into line parallel to the beach which is now about a mile away and then we open up with all our port guns; ship is shivering. Roar is deafening as they spit fiery death at the shoreline. How anything can survive is a mystery. Two ships ahead of us have done same, and so do all the ships after us. Meanwhile all the boats have put off from the ship an hour ago. They are circling in the rendezvous area, ready to hit the beach at 0730-H hour.

²⁵¹ Talk Between Ships radio network,

0725—Twenty-one dive bombers, ours, come over; then all hell breaks loose. They are torpedo bombers loaded with twelve clusters of bombs each, 100 bombs. They come roaring in over the beach, open their bomb bays and then are gone until they return at another level and strafe. One of the sailors remarks that the way they ease the “dusters” out of their bays reminds him of pouring rice out of a cup.

0730—The assault troops, first wave of second battalion of the 2nd Raider Regiment storm ashore and some crumple immediately; in fact, the machine guns from the well dug-in positions are spitting at them as they make for the beach.

First wave of third Marines, ninth Marines and Raider Bn. moves in. Here things stop going according to plan. As raiders on right pass two small islands, Puruata and Torokina, lying a couple of hundred yards off shore, they come under heavy machine gun and small arms fire, bullets spitting into boats. A raider outfit debarks from the USS Fuller and starts to clean up the two little islands which are only about two hundred yards long. The boats make for the beach, but these boys on the right flank run into small arms fire again from the shore with artillery now and mortars lobbing shells in and around them. Learn later that Japs had moved 300 men into the area after our amphibious scouts had visited it sometime previously to gain an idea of the strength of the enemy installations.

The noise of the intermittent cough of an enemy machine gun winnowing the ranks of our boys is a chilling noise. In the face of withering fire the boys press forward.

On left flank of the beach, boys are luckier. They have no opposition from the Japs, but plenty from the surf

and beach which slopes steeply. Through the glasses I see complete disorganization. The surf is so high that the boats are broached as soon as they hit and the men and their gear are spilling out. It was later decided to abandon this section of the beach after we lost about 90 boats.

0745—Enemy planes on the way. Ten minutes later four high altitude bombers drop their loads and scoot. We cruise around until 0930. In the meantime our P 38's appear in the sky, lightning fast as they fly over us in protection. We are occasionally under savage air attack.

1005—Underway again; big formation of Jap planes 14 miles away. In five minutes they are over us. We execute evasive maneuvers frantically. Two peel off for us, one comes in, then catches the full load of hot steel in the face of his plane, drops his bomb, then starts to climb up, bursts into flame and then plummets straight into the ocean. Other frightened, runs away; broke off run.

Destroyer nearest the shore attacked by six dive bombers; they let go stick after stick at her but all miss her, miraculously so, and she knocks down three. Into the anchorage area again, with Deo Gratias once more. Unloading continues. Meanwhile, ashore.

1100—First wounded return to the ship.

1255—Lt. Col. Joe McCaffrey dies with a bullet in his shoulder and one in his back that cut his spine, paralyzing him from his hips down. Give him the Last Sacraments.²⁵²

1:20 P.M.—Studer dies with a badly mashed left leg and other severe wounds; caught full force of hand grenade, front view.

²⁵² McCaffery, 37 when he died, was a native of Chester, Pennsylvania. He was awarded the Navy Cross posthumously. The citation reads, in part: “When the initial assault wave under his command landed out of position and became momentarily confused, Lieutenant Colonel McCaffery, realizing the danger of immobilization by enemy fire, immediately organized his command, fearlessly exposing himself to heavy fire from mortars and automatic weapons while proceeding from unit to unit in order to direct the disposition of his troops for maximum effectiveness. Initiating a daring attack, Lieutenant Colonel McCaffery personally led his men against Japanese positions until he was mortally wounded.” <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/92741011/joseph-patrick-mccaffery>

2:30 P.M. – Small island, Puruta, just before coming to the beach still being cleaned up by the Third Raider Battalion. Machine guns are still barking death. Japs don't surrender.

3:30 P.M. – Bullet from that island hit man aboard the USS Fuller; she moves further out.

American Legion is aground on a shoal; tugs pull her off, but only after she had been peppered by bombs from a 40 bomber squadron of Japs, most of whom decide to pick on her. Fourteen Lightnings break up their formation. They jettison their bombs and run. Meanwhile, we, after running out again, move in. Shall we pull through? Good folks back home know nothing of all of this.

4:00 P.M. – Sullen, black clouds move down from mountains, nature in an angry mood. Black clouds hide the sun, then thunder and lightning, tropical storm of severe intensity. Thunder growls and growls, then sharp cracks split the silence, as if she was saying, "I can make noise also." Our man-made thunder of the morning was much harder on the ears. Lt. Mills says that the Japs were just getting their breakfast when they looked out to see us. Some of the kettles with hot water were still boiling as our men went through the dugouts and the bivouac area.

6:00 P.M. – Underway again, Deo Gratias, with instructions that ships that did not finish loading will return tomorrow morning to finish the job.

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 1943

All Souls Day.

0445 – General Quarters. 0530 – Three Masses.

Everybody is dog-tired today. Recollections of yesterday: Two Jap bombers parachuting out of their planes; one floats down slowly and settles on the water, machine-gunned to death, other tangles self in his chute and falls like a stone to his death. General Harris, Air General of the Marines

talking with his flyers. "Homer, don't get into a fight and find out that you haven't enough gas."

"What's the matter, Beaver?" "These ships are taking cracks at me. Tell them to cut it out."
"Get up higher where you belong."

Lt. Callaghan, censoring reporters' dispatches in the Executive Officer's office, remarks that flyers did a wonderful job. On one occasion there were 40 Jap bombers with 60 fighters on the way to attack us. Our boys intercepted them and they never got through.

Boat from USS Adams, which has the worst beach, suffered a direct hit from a mortar which killed most of the Marines and the boat crew. Our two wounded men were in our boat #5 when a mortar hit directly behind the coxswain on the wooden stern of the boat. Wood took most of the shrapnel, so explaining the light wounds of Cox, Foster and Richardson.

Puruata Island, 11 o'clock. Turn glasses on the beach; signalman says Marines are stalking along. Can't see them at first, they blend so perfectly with the background, then catch them. They are separate, five of them, cautiously jumping from one coconut tree trunk to another over the ground.

See one Marine crouched down behind an uprooted tree; intermittent barks of a machine gun. He peeks up, ducks down as gun spits out at him again. Three or four times he looks up and then reached for a hand grenade, pulls the pin and lets it fly through the air.

Dr. Connor went ashore with the beach party. We lose 60 good men to Boat Pool # 11. These men will be in for a rough time of it for a few days until reinforcements come in.

Coughing of a Jap machine gun is a chilling thing to hear. Immediately wonder how many boys it knocks over. These guns cough for a minute or so, then follow it with a spasm at the end, as if to finish whatever is in front of them.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 1943

0615–Mass.

Anchored in this little haven with the other ships of our convoy with the exception of those that had to stay, the Crescent City and the Hunter Liggett.

Four heavy cruisers come in at dusk, battle worn and scarred. Fr. Steve Hannon comes aboard at 8:30 P.M. from the USS Columbia that suffered three hits, all minor; two on gun barrels and one forward on starboard bow that took the heads of some canned hams in the storeroom.

Battle was Sunday night; sank two destroyers and one cruiser. Battle raged at ten miles distance for two hours in the early hours of the morning. Cruisers Denver, Columbia, Steves, Cleveland and Montpelier, the flagship, patch their wounds, refuel, rearm themselves, lie to during the night.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 4, 1943

0615–Mass.

Press report this morning states that a Jap cruiser and four Jap destroyers were sunk in a naval battle on Tuesday morning with slight material damage to our ships and some casualties to personnel. Action took place 40 miles from Empress Augusta Bay [where the Marines from the Clymer had landed]. One of our destroyers limps in today, the Foote, being towed by a tug. Her stern was shot away. In the naval battle the Japs lost 17 out of the 67 planes they sent over to help their surface units in their attack.

Four cruisers steam out this evening at sundown, the place of the Denver being taken by the Nashville. They are lean and hungry, looking for another kill.

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 5, 1943

0615–Mass.

This little hidden away Bay used to harbor the Jap fleet until Marines captured the surrounding islands last August. When Tulagi and Gavutu fell, then this anchorage was available for our ships. In the taking of both of these small islands, the Marine losses were very heavy.

This little scooped out harbor is U-shaped with a right angle approach to it. It is completely screened from the sea.

Low mountains ride up from its shores on which are not half, but wholly hidden oil and ammunition dumps. Coconut trees lean down to the water's edge on the sides of the small mountains, fresh wounds in the red earth give away the location of the dumps. Camouflage will shortly disguise them.

Half hour ride to Tulagi to pick up a movie for tonight, "Rio Rita," with Abbott and Costello.²⁵³ Meet Fr. McGowan, OMI, from Lowell who expects a change of duty shortly to Noumea. Also there is Chaplain Blackwood.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 6, 1943

0615–Mass.

Make arrangements for Sunday Mass aboard the Liggett. Two task forces of cruisers operating out of this anchorage. They burn up fuel very quickly, for after being out for only three days, they return for another long drink.

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 1943

0615 – Mass. 0915 – Mass aboard the Hunter Liggett.

Quiet afternoon; another recreation party goes ashore with a couple of bottles of beer for each man.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 1943

0615–Mass.

0830–To Hunter Liggett; discover they are about to get underway, hastily beat retreat, not knowing where I might wind up.

²⁵³ Comedic duo fights and defeats Nazi spies on the Mexican border. (MGM, 1942)

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 1943

Committee visits American Legion to report on her need of Navy Yard overhaul. Back to Tulagi, ashore for movie, meet Fr. McGowan, have him aboard for dinner tonight. He stays for the movie.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 1943

0600–Mass.

We anchor outside the nets at 0700, see task force limp in. USS Birmingham fresh from the States on her first mission has her port bow shot away and her stern badly damaged. In this battle area only two days when she catches it. Daylight visible through her bow at her waterline.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 1943

To Tassafaronga, Guadalcanal where we load up the 129th combat team for actual fighting duty in Bougainville. Finish loading at 5:00. In the meantime I went ashore to put through a call for Ed at the 52nd Field Hospital; learn he has been transferred to Noumea as of a month ago. Confirmation of the transfer pleases me.

Underway at 6:00; down about 30 miles where we anchor for the night under a bomber's moon. No trouble, Deo Gratias.

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 1943

0600–Mass. Excellent group of Catholics, about 100 at Mass.

0800–Underway. Six ships in convoy, Liggett, Legion, Crescent City, Alhena, and the Alchiba, with seven destroyer escorts and plane protection overhead. As usual, sun is a scorcher overhead. Hear confessions morning and afternoon.

Cruise north slowly for most of the night and then in the morning will head north to Bougainville,

into the jaws of the Japs again. May Our Lady, Star of the Sea, protect us as she has in the past.

6:38–General Quarters. Looks as though it might be a bad night for us. There is a bomber's moon overhead, bursting with fullness. Easy to read a paper on deck, I pull my notebook out of my pocket and read it with the greatest of ease.²⁵⁴ Passengers loll on decks, drinking in the silent beauty of the tropical night. Sea is hammered silver. Other ships are no longer dark silhouettes on the ocean; they are as brightly lit up as we are. A short distance away three cruisers and five destroyers come up on our port quarter going the wrong way, then they turn around and steam ahead to intercept any Jap task force that may be trying to annihilate us. Report on battle yesterday, results satisfactory. Operations hampered by bad weather. Aircraft carrier Essex radioed that she was being attacked by dive bombers; managed to get away from them.

Ten o'clock to bed with instructions to call me at four. I want to give Viaticum to the men going over the side. Will be large number, judging from the confessions heard both this morning and this afternoon.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 1943

12:30–General Quarters. Enemy planes overhead. Moon lighting us like a Christmas tree. Destroyers open up with their guns on our starboard side. General Quarters lasts for half an hour.

1:55–General Quarters again. “Prepare to repel enemy planes,” word is passed to all ships through TBS. In distance see angry red flashes of gunfire.

Our task force is engaging the Japs. We are not molested. Lasts for half an hour. I celebrate Mass and consecrate hosts.

²⁵⁴ That Foley used a pocket notebook to take contemporaneous notes for his diary would explain the sharp detail in many entries. At the same time, one must wonder why, if he was seen to take notes, no one reported him to a senior officer, since the keeping of journals by servicemen was for security reasons forbidden under military law. As with what seems his easy access to communiques in the ship's “Radio Shack,” the explanation may lie in his status as a priest and chaplain.

0400—General Quarters again. What a night!. Or rather, morning. Kip Morey tells me that there are four enemy planes tailing us and four cruising overhead. Cruiser Denver was hit by a torpedo plane that has left her dead in the water. An ocean going tug is dispatched from our task force to help her. She also asks for fire support, thus indicating that her guns have been put out of commission. We stay on GQ until 0715.

Out on deck for another look at Bougainville. Much different approach this trip. No tenseness, we know our men are on the beachhead, no firing of our guns, no bombing by our planes. Still as beautiful as ever, sun comes up blood red behind the mountains on our starboard. This land must make for hard fighting. Growth of jungle down to water's edge. About two miles back a level shelf of plateau about a mile high, then a comforter of clouds sitting on it, snow white. Directly behind them, a ridge of four mountains, about a mile higher. To the right the plateau breaks off sharply into a gorge, then rises again. Directly behind this section of it, is a 10,000 foot volcanic cone. Once again the clouds are spiraling up from it and trailing off on to the horizon, like a white scarf on a girl's head streaming in the wind. Beauty beyond description, yet there is hell below, for the thunder and crack of gunfire are breaking the morning peace and silence.

0800—First troops go over the side and in to the beach. Dr. Connor comes aboard looking decidedly peaked. He has been a busy man attending the wounded. Says the Japs gave them hell at night with their bombing, whereas we plaster them with our bombs during the daytime. Casualties among our boys are high, but Jap's are astronomical.

Beach is littered with our landing boats that were piled high by the surf, over a million dollars worth in the one day, November 1st. Beachhead is now six miles long and about three miles deep.

Unloading of ship proceeds satisfactorily until 11:30, when air attack begins to develop. However our

interceptors keep them off and we are back at the transport area in half an hour.

Kip Morey informs me the reason for the long and numerous General Quarters alarms this morning. The Jap planes would come in, say from port quarter, [compass] bearing 215 first, 14 miles out, then 8, 6, 4, 2, when destroyer on the line of attack would open up, then Japs would veer off and out again to 20 miles, then start to slide in again, 16, 13, 11, 6, [compass] bearing 175, two miles off starboard beam and destroyer there would open fire. So it went for all the early hours of the morning, the Japs trying to slip through the cordon, attempting to find out where there was an opening.

3 P.M.—Heavy firing off our port side where the Japs are in command. They are being shelled by our artillery, who, according to Marine Officers aboard, have been doing a murderous job on the Jap concentrations of men. Have taken aboard about a dozen wounded, none of them seriously wounded except for one Jap pilot who was shot through the right cheek. The bullet caused his left eye to disintegrate and the swelling from the wound has puffed his face up and closed his remaining eye tighter than a drum. Men who brought him aboard inform us that when he first was questioned, he refused to talk, but he was killed with kindness. Amazed, he spilled all the information that his questioners desired, an interpreter helping them along.

4 P.M.—General Quarters again. Jap planes on the way once more. We leave behind two boats and head for home again.

6:37—General Quarters. Bombers' moon again. Hope for the best, expecting the worst. Fortunately clouds come up and they promise to escort us home in darkness. Admiral Halsey should be safely back in Guadalcanal from Torokina Pt. [on Bougainville] in a PBY escorted by six fighters, where he left this afternoon.

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 1943

0515–Mass. 0615–Mass.

0900–Mass. 1000–General Service.

1100–We sight on the horizon the cruiser Denver being towed by a tug. In the battle of two nights ago, that we could see about 20 miles away, she was hit by a torpedo from a plane. Casualties, 19 killed and one critically wounded. We come abreast of her and pass by quickly, for she is making only five knots; hit was on her starboard side aft. Major Kenneth Neville, USMC, informs me this morning that we are bound for New Zealand after we get into Guadalcanal. Cheers.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 1943

0600–Mass.

We anchored last night at midnight; moved in this morning to the shelter of Tulagi Harbor. I visited the hospital ashore where I pass a cemetery where there are buried about 300 American Marines and sailors. Nearby the dock overlooking the anchorage is a sign:

“Admiral Halsey says:

Kill Japs, Kill Japs,

Kill more Japs.

You will kill more yellow Bastards

If you do your work well.”

Comment: Chinese are yellow also.

We send ashore the Jap pilot who was our prisoner shot down from out of the skies over Empress Augusta Bay by our anti-aircraft fire on the shore. One eye has been completely destroyed by the shell that lodged behind it; the other is swollen tight. He leaves after kind treatment, looking better than when he came aboard. War is so senseless. He is a pleasant enough boy, about 25; would make a good companion, but is now a deadly enemy, one of the yellow Bastard Rot! The spirit evidenced by that sign is what brought on the war and will hinder the peace. Are we Americans still color conscious?

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 1943

Mass starts off each day. We are quietly anchored as before with movies at night to refresh the crew. Fr. McGowan and Chaplain Markley aboard tonight for dinner.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 1943

0615–Mass.

Tom Quinn, editor of the Boston College Stylus for '38 and '39 comes aboard from the Titania for a visit. We chew the fat for a while about events at B.C.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 1943

0615–Mass.

Wally Boudreau, B.C. '43, aboard for the evening. No accommodations ashore so he uses us for a hotel for the night. His roommate is Bubber Ely of Tulane, both bound for PT boats around the corner of the Bay.

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 1943

In the afternoon put up graveyard markers in the Tulagi Cemetery for “Lt. Col. J. P. McCaffrey, USMC wounded at Empress Augusta Bay, November 1, 1943. Died aboard the USS George Clymer November 1, 1943.” Also for PFC. J. S. Studer.

About 400 men buried in the cemetery ashore; 19 more to go in today from the USS Denver, hit protecting us a week ago tonight by torpedo plane.

Learn that the campaign is going along well, but that it has its bad drawbacks as well as good features. Here are some of them:

1. The rain is terrific. It is described by a Marine combat correspondent “With commendable understatement” in a brief three word dispatch: “Bougainville, November 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, it rained!” These torrential downpours handicapped operations unimaginably. Everything bogged down. Men living in sheer, wet misery.
2. During attack on enemy positions, some of our light tanks, confused, attacked our own men.
3. Just when our men were about to jump off to the attack, enemy artillery ranged in perfectly, opened

up fire at virtually the exact minute of jump-off with heavy accurate fire that inflicted the worst casualties of the entire campaign up until that time.

4. Koiari Beach Raid. This place was about ten miles south of our beachhead, seemed to be main communication center of the enemy and had a lot of supply dumps established here with perhaps 900 men. Same number of our men went on raid to wipe it out. Went ashore in early dawn, but probably never would have made it except that they were mistaken by Japs for their own. They had been expecting reinforcements. A Jap officer sauntered out of the jungle, began conversation with the first man he met, to their mutual astonishment and his “ultimate mortification.” Their initial surprise over, the enemy reacted violently. They had almost 2500 men in the area. Our boys were penned in on the beach perimeter only 350 yards long and 1800 feet deep with the sea at their backs. By noon it was obvious that attempt was doomed to failure and they would have to get off. Japs killed first two attempts by mortar fire. After dark invasion boats finally made it, got last man off at 2100, with dead and, unhappily, some of the wounded left behind.

Today the Hunter Liggett and the American Legion ships from our transport division leave for home. They steam slowly by us. We line our decks, they line theirs, everybody waving. “Lucky birds, “ we all remark. For ourselves, we say that our motto is “Frisco in’48.” Both ships are badly in need of repairs; job will take about four months, then they will come back to help us seize Rabaul [on New Guinea].

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 1943

0615–Mass.

Today we take aboard the 8th Field Artillery veterans of Guadalcanal and New Georgia. They are bound for a vacation in New Zealand, which they have so richly earned. With them is Fr. McGoldrick, their

Chaplain. Fr. McGowan, Navy, relieved at Tulagi, also is a passenger bound for Noumea where he will be stationed at the hospital.

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 1943

0600–Mass. 0900–Mass. 1000–General Service.

One of the most beautiful sunsets I have ever seen last night. Went ashore at Tulagi to pick up Fr. McGowan’s typewriter which he forgot in his packing haste. Tent on the crest of the hill overlooking the bay to the west down below; directly below, Navy tents along a palm-fringed shore. Across the bay, a chain of lovely mountains. Sun had set half an hour before. Sun was reflecting its glory from beyond the horizon. Palm fronds etched vividly against the lavender skyline. Clouds of all formations like cathedrals with pinnacles and arches suffused with dark lavender. Not a sound broke the tropical stillness. The day’s work was ended, the men were sitting patiently below on the level ground for the movie, “Here We Go Again,” with Charlie McCarthy and Edgar Bergen and Fibber McGee²⁵⁵ to begin. If an artist could have caught the rich warmth of that lavender in the sky, its reflection on the waters of Tulagi Bay, the dark purple of the mountains and the black silhouettes of the coconut trees, he would approach genius.

2:30–Underway for Noumea with the Jackson, Hays, Adams, Alhena and Titania²⁵⁶ and six escort vessels. If we all go to New Zealand, it will be a mighty invasion on their hospitality. Signalman on sub on port side signals “Good Luck.” Must think that since we are fully loaded, we are on our way to another invasion.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 22, 1943

0436–General Quarters.

0600–Mass.

²⁵⁵ The salt-of-the-earth couple “Fibber McGee” and “Molly”—stars of radio and vaudeville—were the featured players in this RKO comedy (1942) about a man who believes, incorrectly, that his wife is in love with an old flame. Antics ensue.

²⁵⁶ All, like the *Clymer*, attack transport ships.

Once again we are up at the unearthly hour for General Quarters, as we steam south in convoy bound for Ed's new home. Weather is still very warm, but passengers have been out in these parts for almost three years, some of them, so they don't mind it too much.

Forgot to mention that last Saturday the USS McKean, APD, was lost. Attacked 20 miles away from Empress Augusta Bay. With her went down one-third of her passengers and crew, well over 100 men. Her squadron came in with their colors dipped, one less than they went out. "We were four, are now three."²⁵⁷

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 23, 1943

0416—General Quarters. We'll be up at midnight if this keeps up.

0600—Mass.

Passengers are enjoying every moment of the trip. They are veterans of two hard campaigns, Guadalcanal and Munda, New Georgia. Are regular Army except for a handful of draftees. Outfit is the 25th American Division. Like all the other outfits, they have a low opinion of Americal; can afford it, not knowing the hells those men went through.²⁵⁸

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 1943

No General Quarters.

0600—Mass.

This noon we had our Thanksgiving Day dinner. Today rather than tomorrow because men will be very busy bringing the ship into port and then, when we have dropped anchor, in collecting outstanding requisitions. No turkey, but very good beef steak.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 25, 1943

0900—I speak over the loud speaker on Thanksgiving Day and end with a prayer.

Once again, officers and men, we find ourselves on board ship on Thanksgiving Day. Those who were members of our ship's company a year ago will recall that on this day we were one thousand miles out of Norfolk on our way back from Casablanca. Our passengers were survivors. A year later we are steaming in convoy on another ocean under the Southern Cross, making our way into harbor. Our passengers now are veterans of two hard campaigns against a savage and determined foe.

Looking back over the twelve months that have gone by since last Thanksgiving, it is safe to say that there isn't one of us who wouldn't agree that we have much to be thankful for to Almighty God. We made the 10,300 mile cruise without mishap or incident. Month after month we have operated in enemy submarine waters yet we have never been the victim of a successful attack. We have been bombed from the air and the bombs have fallen wide of their mark. As last November so also this, our ship participated in a major offensive action. Shortly after we returned to court danger and again we escaped unharmed while other ships suffered hits on their second trip. For the entire year's operation our sum total of casualties of the ship's crew is two and those were of a minor nature. Happily, both men are again on active duty with us, none the worse for their wounds.

These facts are reviewed simply to show how fortunate we have been. Of us the words of Scripture are eminently true: "The lines have fallen to us in goodly places."²⁵⁹

²⁵⁷ A destroyer, the McKean was sunk by airborne torpedoes, on November 17, 1943, in Empress Augusta Bay.

²⁵⁸ Composed shortly after December 7 of "orphaned" National Guard regiments from North Dakota, Illinois, and Massachusetts, the Americal Division—named for its first posting in New Caledonia—fought on Guadalcanal and in the Bougainville and Leyte campaigns, and then took part in the occupation of Japan. It was later named the 23rd Infantry Division and was active, under the Americal name, in Vietnam.

²⁵⁹ *Psalms*, 16:6.

Our passengers also, as some of you have told us personally, have abundant reason to be grateful to Almighty God. There were many occasions when His Providence watched over you in your operations. Each man alone knows their number. We are glad, then, to have you join with us in our prayer of Thanksgiving.

‘O Almighty and Everlasting God, You who stand by to protect those who put their trust in you, with a full heart we offer a prayer of thanksgiving for the blessings visited upon our ship and upon us, soldier and sailor, since last Thanksgiving Day. For the future we ask you, through your Son, Jesus Christ, true God and true Man, who stilled the stormy sea, to keep watch upon our bridge, to protect us windward and lee. Teach us to be generous and strong in serving you and our country with courage. Teach us to give and not count the cost, to fight and not heed the wounds, to labor and ask for no reward save that of fulfilling your Holy Will in all things, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.²⁶⁰

Go ashore at 1000 to dig up Ed who is at Hospital #109 at St. Louis about 15 miles outside the city of Noumea. He and I meet at 2 o’clock on the Navy landing with Charlie Bushois, then out to the ship where they spend the night after a good dinner and a movie, *The Road to Singapore*.²⁶¹

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 26, 1943

0600–Mass at which Ed attends. Unfortunately, although Ed looks well, his looks belie his condition. He has had a long and serious bout of malaria. It finally emerged from its suppressive state when he changed climates from hot and tropical to cool and comfortable.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 27, 1943

0600–Mass.

0700–Underway for Auckland. With us in convoy are the President ships, the Jackson, Adams and Hayes and three KA’s — Libra, and two others whose names escape me presently.²⁶² The men who are our passengers find that the now beginning to cool a bit is a decided change from what they have been used to for the last 18 months. They are looking for blankets! Blue sky, blue sea, blue ships, lovely contrasts.

Gorgeous sunset this evening. As sun slanted down the sky about fifteen minutes before it set, it was hidden from the eye in a cloud bank that stretched straight across the sky. Between it and the horizon was clear blue. This was gradually changed into pink, then amber, then gold and then into a lovely lavender. Mr. Racey and I stood on the flying bridge and marveled at the masterpiece that God was painting in the sky.

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 28, 1943

0615–Mass. 0900–Mass. 1000–General Service.

Passengers are eagerly asking questions about New Zealand. Our men eagerly praise it very highly, both the people and the country (and the food.)

One of our PhM’s [pharmacist mate], Roy, has a bad case of rash still plaguing him. The rest of us have had ours cleared by the change of climate. “What are you taking to cure it?” I asked him. “Only one thing will cure this, Father, and that is the hills of New Hampshire.”

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 1943

0600–Mass.

²⁶⁰ The last sentence is an adaptation of St. Ignatius’ “Prayer for Generosity.”

²⁶¹ Musical comedy in which Bing Crosby and Bob Hope vie for the love of Dorothy Lamour. It was the first of what would be seven popular “road films” featuring the three stars.

²⁶² KA is an abbreviation of the acronym AKA, which designated an attack cargo ship.

Fr. McGoldrick enjoys every minute of the trip, relaxing after his 18 months of combat with this artillery outfit. He is from Los Angeles; excellent priest.

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 1943

0600–Mass.

Men are very talkative in breakfast line. Have the spark that sight of land always generates in everybody after some days at sea. Since half past five, we have been passing land on our starboard side, the headlands of New Zealand. They are as rugged looking as when we first saw them months ago. Strange rock formation, the very first we saw, still standing guard out in the water about three miles off shore. It is an inverted U with its feet in the water forming an arc, with one prong of the arc much thicker than the other. Looks like the upper tooth of a giant that fell out and stuck in the bottom of the ocean where it fell. Only trouble is that it had a big cavity in it that now lets us see daylight on the horizon.

We steam along the long 100 mile channel in single file, four ships, the others having left us for Wellington. About two o'clock we sight the first houses on the shore. Trim, neat, multi-colored. Overhear one soldier say to another, "Say, doesn't the sight of a real house make you feel like a million dollars?"

We dock at 2 P.M., then down the gangway to arrange for ship's dance at the Metropole Ballroom.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 1, 1943

0600–Mass.

Statistics revised on the Marine casualties. At Tarawa: 1026 killed; 2557 wounded. At Makin: 65 killed; 300 wounded. At Apemama: 1 killed;

3 wounded. We had those men from the Second Marine Division aboard last June for maneuvers at Paikakariki, north of Wellington. It was a mass sacrifice on the part of the Marines; in fact, massacre of them. One correspondent counted 105 dead Marines in a space of 20 yards, which is 60 feet or that is two to a foot.²⁶³

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 2, 1943

0600–Mass.

Dance beginning to assume some shape; all arrangements practically completed.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 3, 1943

0600–Mass.

Dinner with Fr. Linehan at Telford Ave., Balmoral. Dean Murphy is on retreat. Rectory is lovely, for it is summer here.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 4, 1943

0600–Mass.

Visit five other ships to inform them of Mass aboard Clymer tomorrow.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 5, 1943

0630–Confessions aboard the Crescent City, followed by 0700 Mass. Then back to the FFF for 0900 Mass, attended by many men from nearby ships. Altar looked lovely with fresh flowers, gladioli and jebras.²⁶⁴

At 1230 out on a Mt. Roskill car to the end of the line and then a four mile walk out to the crest of the hill, on one side the Tasman Sea and on the other, the Pacific. It was a beautiful summer day, corresponding to about the third week of June back home.

²⁶³ Marine deaths on Tarawa are now counted at 1,009, and wounded at 2,101. These were incurred over the course of only 72 hours. The Makin Island figures for the Marines are 51 dead and 14 wounded. Foley may have conflated Army and Marine wounded. The report of Marine bodies tumbled together on beaches at Tarawa is borne out by photographs. Foley would have known many of the dead and wounded.

²⁶⁴ A tropical sunflower.

Flowers in profusion on every side, luxurious beds of pansies, geraniums, trellised roses, seven foot high, sweet peas, Easter lilies. At the end of the car line, concrete road led out onto section that finally ended in wide open summer meadows with pine trees bordering the road. Lovely summer afternoon. Off in the distance a plane visible and faintly audible, so far away seems to be drifting lazily across the sky. On my left a skylark is pouring forth its soul “in profuse strains of unpremeditated art.”²⁶⁵ I cannot see him overhead. In the distance the mountains fall away, fold upon fold, and a green house in the distance catches the full brilliance of the sun and gives it back a thousand fold.

The sharp, fresh green of early Spring is upon the fields, contrasting with the dark green of the pines. Along the road ride a young couple on a bicycle, singing in harmony, “I’ll see you again,” beautifully rendered. On the other side of the road, sheep are grazing on the side of a hill and at the foot cows are munching away.²⁶⁶

One house I passed has the father of the family playing with his two youngsters, about four and five respectively. They climb up on his back and then tumble off onto the lawn and shout their happiness and laughter.

A rooster far away crows his tune with no echoing reply. The summer wind is sighing in the pines. The whole scene breathes of peace and happiness. I can’t help thinking of the boys up north, pouring out the red sweet wine of their youth on Bougainville and those others who died in Tarawa recently.

MONDAY AND TUESDAY, DECEMBER 6 AND 7, 1943

Dance at Metropole for ship’s complement.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 8, 1943

Feast of Our Lady’s Immaculate Conception.
0630—Mass with confessions preceding.

Church parties from the Crescent City and the flagships alongside. Visited Fr. Linehan at Good Shepherd Church. Telford Avenue. Had dinner with him, then visited the House of the Good Shepherd.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 9, 1943

0600—Mass.

Tried to send mother flowers for Christmas but was told that the practice had been discontinued by the bank.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 10, 1943

0600—Mass.

Ashore first to the Little Sisters of the Poor with a case of Baby Ruth bars, then to the orphanage at Northcote with another case for the boys there, and then to the pastor of Northcote Church, Fr. Hunt, with cigarettes for himself and Norine, his housekeeper. Visit with Fr. Hunt to one of his excellent parishioners, a florist. He tells me, “You will enjoy his family. They are the salt of the earth.” We approach the white farmhouse. “Hope he is in,” says Fr. Hunt. No answer to our knock. “Perhaps he is out working on his flowers.” We make our way around the back of the house into a big cultivated garden, through beds of flowers, some in blossom, others just seeded in neat, trim rows. Down in the far corner of the field, four figures, industriously working by hand a horizontal screen back and forth, are sifting loam.

Wave of hand from Fr. Hunt is reciprocated by Geraldine, the gardener’s daughter, big girl with auburn hair creeping out from under a boy’s cap. About 28 years old, ruddy-faced, with sparkling blue eyes, contagious smile, wearing a faded blue sweater and

²⁶⁵ From Shelley’s “To a Skylark.”

²⁶⁶ “I’ll See You Again” is a melancholy waltz written in 1928 by Noel Coward. One of his most popular songs, it’s been recorded by pop, opera, jazz and rock performers. The lyrics Foley heard sung on the road to Auckland’s Mt. Roskill might have included “I’ll see you again / Whenever spring breaks through again / Time may lie heavy between / but what has been / Can leave me never.”

trousers, dusty face, streaked with lines of honest sweat, strong hands, barefooted, beautiful face even beneath the grime, completely unconscious of it. Would make a debutante jealous of her beauty. Will make a fine wife for some lucky man. Introductions, “Happy to meet the visitor from overseas.” “Where’s your dad?” “Just a moment, Father, think he is in the greenhouse.” We make our way to it. “Dad?” “Hello.” “Have a surprise for you.” He comes around a corner of the greenhouse, is about 68, stoop-shouldered, originally from Alsace-Lorraine. Lived on a farm all his life. Bowed graciously as he shook hands. “Honored, indeed, to have as my guest an American Priest.” All the old-world courtesy is in his voice and movements. “Sit down, please, Fathers, and have some of my home made cider.” We sip it seated in his greenhouse without any panes of glass. “Too expensive, Father, these days.”

Son, about thirty, comes in, just released from the Army. Strapping man with complete absence of pretense, just like his sister. What a contrast between them and the Back Bay [Boston] couple wasting their time and their youth in overheated night clubs, getting their pictures in the papers, as they nurse their fifth cocktail or lead their Afghanistan hound on a leash down Commonwealth Avenue. Over to the city again to see Mrs. Keenan, 70 Richardson, to tell her about her daughter, Sister Geraldine at Latoka, Fiji.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 11, 1943

0600–Mass.

One of the men still missing since last Monday night, J. W. Castle, BM1c.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 12, 1943

0900–Mass with Church parties present from other ships. After the Mass, word passed down, “All hands not on watch report to the Boat Deck Forward.” There Grymen delivers a speech, presents me with

five gifts, three foot statue of St. Patrick, lovely lace alb, pen and pencil desk set, a clock made of kawhri wood, with three kiwis perched on top, and an order for \$25 worth of photographs. Grateful to the men; tell them I hope that I will prove worthy of the spirit behind the gifts.²⁶⁷

In the afternoon went to the zoo with Fr. Minton, then had dinner with him at Albert’s and later we ended the day with a visit to the Christian Brothers College. We parted and he boarded the Rixey for transportation to Lunga Point.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 13, 1943

0600–Mass.

0800–Underway. Ferries crowded with people going to work are crossing the harbor as we shove off, a beautiful sight with our long lines and our fresh coat of paint.

As we stand topside, one of the men, Abe DiBacco, informs me that yesterday during Mass, there were three Sisters on the ferry that was standing in its slip during the Mass. The ferry like all the others was jam packed with folks on their way to the beaches to spend a lovely summer day. When the blessing came at the end of the Mass, the three Sisters stood up and received Our Lord’s blessing a longinquo.²⁶⁸

Funeral of Castle, BM1c, today at 1300 ashore. Yesterday viewed the body and said some prayers over it at Morrison’s Funeral Parlor, Parneel St., Auckland. Since the body had been in the water of the harbor since last Monday night, Castle was completely unrecognizable. Body decomposing after week in water. Happened when drunk; fell overboard?

Steam out of Auckland Channel without escort.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 14, 1943

0600–Mass.

²⁶⁷ Native to the North Island, Kauri’s are New Zealand’s largest and longest-living trees, analogous to the California Redwood.

²⁶⁸ Longinquo: Latin for at a distance.

Underway on this beautiful day when we hate to leave the city and its hospitable people. Christmas with them would have been delightful; had three invitations to spend the day with different people, however we have grim business up north with Tojo.

With us are the Crescent City, the Libra, and the Fuller. Rixey brings up the stern; aboard her are Paul Goode, B.C. '32 and Galvin, also B.C. She leaves us when we turn to the headlands of New Zealand, about 100 miles north of Auckland. Once again we are on our own. One of the flag officers informs me that when we were coming in here, we altered our course on receipt of the word that a Jap sub was directly athwart our path.²⁶⁹

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 15, 1943
0600–Mass.

Am packing the clock the men gave me last Sunday, hoping and praying my mother receives it unharmed. Send it fourth class, cost \$2.80. Wonder when she will receive it.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 16, 1943
0600–Mass.

Uneventful trip so far; have plane coverage now as we near the Fiji Islands.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 17, 1943
0600–Mass.

A year ago today we left Norfolk to start our 10,300 mile trip out here. It has been an eventful year, but none of us is any the worse for the wear, thank God. We have much to be thankful for to Almighty God.

We are approaching Suva, as lovely as ever in the early morning. The hour is six o'clock. The town seems to be still asleep from ten miles out as I train the long glass upon it. On our port side, the sun has hit the mountains behind the shoreline mountains, and they present a vivid washed green color under its rays, while the near

side of these shore mountains are a deep dark green, lovely contrast in this world of contrasts.

Steam in slowly to our berth and are greeted by the natives shouting "Boula," their native hello greeting. Immediately we start taking aboard cargo of the 164th Infantry Regiment, outfit which distinguished itself on Guadalcanal last year.

Meet Fr. Flaherty in town; we dine together aboard. Later meet him and Fr. Tracy and the three of us have dinner in the evening at the Sisters' convent. Bring Sisters two crates of oranges and two hams to help replenish their larder. Also say hello to Fr. Dooley out at the hospital in Sanamboula.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 18, 1943
0600–Mass.

Ashore to wander around the town for a couple of hours, absorbing local color. Go out to a Mr. Turner's half-caste, [who was] recommended by Red Cross for purchase of flowers. I buy gorgeous golden roses and pink baby roses, and deep rich crimson, and Pentheus, a big blossom of red, and a flower that resembles Sweet William, lavender and white colored blossoms, two bouquets of them for \$.50! Half a crown in his money. Natives throng the streets as they did on our first trip, big outsized heads of hair, half-castes, Europeans, Indians, child-mothers. All nations under the sun and our American soldiers in their khakis; quite a mélange. Send cables home for Christmas for the men, about 180 of them.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 19, 1943
0615–Mass. 0900–Mass. 1000–Protestant
Worship, Chaplain Byrd.

1500–Rosary and Benediction.

Lovely morning for Mass topside. We heave up anchor at 1130. Lovely Suva fades gradually out of view. Red merges into the white and the green into the blue of the sky as we head out to sea.

²⁶⁹ The USS *Rixey*, a former ocean liner that could accommodate 1,000 passengers, served as a floating hospital or "casualty evacuation" ship.

Train long glass on the Church and the school and the convent. Sisters said that they always know when we arrive and leave. Notice that one of them is at the third window from the front. Convent on high ground gives them a commanding view of the sea and the approach to Suva. We have the blessing of their prayers as we make our way north again. Their holy prayers will keep us safe, we are sure.

4:00—Topside; green dumplings of islands on our starboard side as we head to sea again with the Crescent City, the Fuller and three escorts. Bright, shining expanse of the waters around us, blue sky overhead, white combers breaking over the coral reefs in the distance on our port side. Scenery made in heaven. Music on the foc'sle by the 164th Infantry Band; one trumpet, one sax, two mandolins, one violin, accordion and the piano. Fine group of boys. Everybody enjoys their songs and their solos. They are good.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 20, 1943

Each one of these days starts as usual with Mass excellently attended by these boys. They are a splendid group.

A sub scare today. One of the escort vessels drops half a dozen ash cans sending shafts of water high to the heavens. Soldiers cluster on the weather decks, a subdued group as they watch the destroyer stalk back and forth over the area in which she picked up Tojo's undersea craft.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 21, 1943

0600—Mass. At table we have music furnished by Sid Feldstein of 15 Michigan Avenue, Dorchester. They are an excellent outfit with an accordion, a trumpet, violin, bass viol and piano.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 23, 1943

0600—Mass.

3:30 P.M.—Sub contact; shafts of water mount to the skies suddenly as one of the vessels drops her ash cans on the marauder of the deep.

At dinner, soloist Bucky Connors sings in the ward-room. Among other songs, "When the lights go on again all over the world." When he finishes, notice many of the officers, Army and Navy, blinking back the tears.²⁷⁰

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 23, 1943

Make arrangements with Chaplain Byrd for services tomorrow for the Protestants.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 24, 1943

0500—General Quarters. Dangerous waters again. Late yesterday we hit Guadalcanal and then lifted the anchor sometime during the night.

We have left behind the "four pipers," old World War I destroyers and taken on the new destroyers for our escorts.²⁷¹ Now we are ready for the men of Tojo as we start to go up the slot once again to Empress Augusta Bay, Bougainville. May the Lord be with us as He has been in the past.

Gore makes me laugh. A mess attendant, he informs me that his father is a blacksmith back home. When I asked him why he didn't follow in his father's footsteps, he replied, "Ain't no mule gonna kick me."

1000—Protestant Church Service.

Day is rainy one, with squalls intermittent.

Slide down the Russell Islands where Elizabeth Brennan's brother died. RIP.

²⁷⁰ A soulful 1942 hit record for baritone big-band singer Vaughan Monroe, the song concludes "When the lights go on again all over the world / And the boys are home again all over the world / And rain or snow is all that may fall from the skies above / A kiss won't mean Goodbye but Hello to love.

²⁷¹ Replaced by newer battleships as the war went on, the "four pipers" were named for the distinctive outline of their four smokestacks.

Hearing confessions afternoon and evening in preparation for tomorrow. This is an excellent Catholic outfit, the 164th Infantry.²⁷²

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 25, 1943

Christmas Day.

0300—I get up and rig the altar in the Mess Hall. No lights topside prevents me from having it under the stars.

0350—Mass with the organ Fr. Flaherty gave me at Suva, being used for the first time by soloist, Bucky Connors, one of the soldiers. Hot, sticky and sweaty in the Mess Hall with the entire ship buttoned up, but men are close to Our Lord.

Setting is stark in its simplicity, but it helps us to recapture the spirit of the first Christmas very easily. Right after Mass they go to breakfast, preparatory to going over the side to face the enemy before the day is out.

Immediately following the first Mass, I celebrate the second in the Library. Then, after thanksgiving, topside, still dark. Men are at their battle stations with helmets and guns all ready for firing. Streaks of light, faint in the east behind the long black ridge of mountains. We are now in single file, with destroyers still deployed on scout patrol on either side of us.

0620—Sunrise; a very weak yellow sun trying honestly but fruitlessly to break through the clouds. A heavy black cloud crossed the horizon a short while ago and emptied its wet cargo. Now the sky is washed white in the east and the sun's light is white also. Still it makes the trees on an island between it and us stand out like matches. Soon the clouds ride into another tropical shower.

0655—Two squads of Hellcats, one six and the other seven, are overhead.²⁷³

0710—Sky cleared of all the storm clouds and we recognize familiar territory on our starboard side. Background of the mountains and the volcano with a cloud wrapped around its head like a scarf in the wind, as before, streaming south for about 1/4 mile. See the airport and gasp with astonishment. It is crammed with planes. Where six weeks ago our dive bombers were pounding, it is now a smooth strip with planes roaring off at a dizzy pace.

0725—Lower all boats is the order from the bridge. They head in after debarking the men over the side to the beach with none of the tenseness that filled them on November 1st when the enemy was waiting on the shore. Day follows routine of all unloading operations.

These boys we put to shore will be in the lines before 24 hours are out. Aboard come the men we put ashore on November 1st. They are a tired, dirty lot, with sleep-less nights taking their strength and their weight. Many of them wounded and bloodstained. Most of them just barely make the nets on the way up. I spy Fr. [Alfred] Kamler and his mate, Chaplain Duplessy from Stoughton, Mass. We have a great reunion.

Unlike our first days here, we have no bombings from Tojo. We have air control here—definitely. All the Marines are loud in their praise of the CB's. They built an airstrip in 19 days with the worst conditions confronting them. Either the elements or the Japs opposed them unceasingly at first. But, "If it is impossible, we do it." They live up to their motto.

No dinner, just sandwiches. Christmas dinner next Tuesday. At 4:00 P.M. we are underway again without any casualties, thank God.

6:00 P.M.—Mass in the shop area with about 300 Marines present and some of my sailors. They raised the roof with their singing of the Christmas carols. "Bougainville and Vigor," Father Kamler called it.

²⁷² Foley was with the 164th Infantry Regiment—a North Dakota National Guard group—from his first days at Guadalcanal to the Bougainville Campaign. He praises the unit several times.

²⁷³ The Grumman F6F Hellcat was a carrier based fighter plane introduced during the second year of the war and widely used in the Pacific Theater, where, unlike its predecessors, it competed well with the Japanese Zero.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 26, 1943

0600–Mass. 0900–Mass. 1000–Protestant Service.

1500–Rosary and Benediction.

Quiet day with everybody relaxing after the work of yesterday.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 27, 1943

0600–Mass.

The Marines leave us this morning for we have arrived at their destination, the Canal [Guadalcanal]. They are a tired group; would much prefer to be going on to New Zealand or some other place than the Canal.

Two memories stand out in my mind most vividly of this trip besides the one mentioned of the Christmas Masses. 1. The airfield with the fighter planes stacked like peas in a pod. 2. The same fighter planes dive bombing a hill about three miles back of the strip. They swooped in and down and then soared up again after dropping their black messages of death. Two attempts had been made before to take this hill, both ineffectual. Now after the dive bombing another attempt will be made. Hope that the boys succeed this third time and so lose no more men. Plan seems to be not to attack beyond this beachhead, to force the Japs to evacuate their men who are south of this point as they did at Kolombangara.²⁷⁴

We are underway again tonight at 6 o'clock for Nandi, Fiji, to pick up another Army outfit for service in Bougainville.²⁷⁵

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 28, 1943

0600–Mass.

Quiet ship again with only ourselves aboard. Press release says today the Marines have made two more landings on New Britain, really beginning to close in on the Japs in Rabaul; will further make untenable the plight of the Japs on Bougainville and speed their evacuation.²⁷⁶

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 29, 1943

0600–Mass.

Days are hot; sea is smooth as a millpond today. Men are chipping rust and re-leading the decks. Lost some good men on Monday by transfers to other ships. Received some in turn from them. They are beginning to find their way around.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 30, 1943

0600–Mass.

Quiet routine day at sea, which is so smooth that there isn't a ripple on the surface. Only indication of movement is the breakers being thrown back by our prow.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 31, 1943

0600–Mass.

We will see the old year out here about six miles south of Latoka where we have been before. Drop the anchor in the afternoon; start to load the 132nd Infantry Regiment who are slated for Bougainville. That means we go north again.

²⁷⁴ One of the Solomon Islands, and the site of a Naval battle 14 days earlier.

²⁷⁵ The Bougainville Campaign, which had an immediate goal of placing an airfield closer to Japanese headquarters in the South Pacific, began on November 1, 1943. Fought in two stages, it would not conclude until August 21 1945, fifteen days after the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima and six days after the Japanese surrender was announced.

²⁷⁶ Rabaul was a port on the island of New Britain in the then-Australian territory of Papua New Guinea. The Japanese seized it early in the war and made it a major garrison. As with Bougainville, and in accordance with an American strategy of "cartwheeling" through the South Pacific toward Japan and leaving behind isolated, if still potent, Japanese forces, Rabaul did not come under the full control of the Allies until the end of the war.

Confessions this evening in preparation for the holy day tomorrow.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 1, 1944

New Year's Day

0600–Mass. 0900–Mass, with many Church parties from the surrounding ships. To the convent about noon with a turkey, two hams and some oranges. Not having met for six months, we are glad to see each other again.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 2, 1944

0600–Mass. 0900–Mass. 2:00 P.M.–Rosary and Benediction, then to the Libra and Fomalhaut for confessions.

5:30 P.M.–Confessions on board the Clymer again, followed by movies at 7:30 P.M.

Day is lovely one, hot as the hottest day back home. Bright sun in blue sky flecked with clouds; on the shore a mile away, green clad mountains with a crest of white clouds.

I heard confessions on the fantail of the Fomalhaut directly alongside their six-inch guns. Lovely panorama as I looked into shore, blue water, yellow beach, green clad mountains, white-tipped combers breaking over the coral reef in rainbow sprays, all of this bathed in golden sunlight with an occasional lazy cloud drifting across the sky. Off in the distance could be heard the drone of a lone seaplane returning from a long patrol at sea. The afternoon was ominously peaceful.

MONDAY, JANUARY 3, 1944

0600–Mass.

Underway at 1 P.M. for Guadalcanal again with the 132nd Infantry Regiment.

Excellent attendance at Mass. Confessions at night at 7 P.M.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 4, 1944

0600–Mass.

Steaming north on convoy with four other ships of which we are the flag. Our new Commodore is our ex-Captain Talbot, a distinct loss to our ship. He is succeeded by Captain Farrar who has a tremendous pair of shoes to fill. Talbot was 4.0 in everything.²⁷⁷

Day is a blustery one, hot and sticky as usual in this land where it is always summer. Word comes in that a patrol plane out of Fiji scouting for submarines has failed to return to her base. We make one of our intentions at Rosary this afternoon that the men will be picked up before they starve to death.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 5, 1944

0600–Mass.

New Captain believes in far more drills than the other. He seems to be regulation also, for orders have been issued about uniforms, jackets, etc. All will be well, provided he is generous to the men with liberty when we hit a New Zealand port. He stands or falls there with the men. They will slave for him if he is considerate of their desires in a liberty port.

Rosary this afternoon as usual with about 175 men present.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 6, 1944

Feast of the Epiphany.

0600–Mass. About 200 Communion.

Today two more men of the ship's company approach me for instructions in the faith.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 7, 1944

We continue to slide through the slot with no air opposition as yet. Weather fortunately is foul; heavy driving rains with low clouds, poor flying weather.

²⁷⁷ Captain Murvale Talcott Farrar (1902–1974) was a 1923 Annapolis graduate. He commanded the *Clymer* from January 1, 1944 to September 5, 1944.

Bless the Russell Islands where Ed Brennan is buried, as we steam by them.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 8, 1944

0600–Mass.

Confessions tonight as usual with big business tomorrow; will be the last chance for some of the men to go to Holy Communion. As usual, I am writing letters to their folks informing them of the fact of Confession.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 9, 1944

0345–The bugler sounds Reveille, “You got to get up, etc.” Ten minutes later, 0355, Mass starts on the starboard side of the mess hall while the men begin breakfast on the port side. I praise the men who are about to leave us for their splendid attendance at daily Mass and Rosary and promise them a remembrance in my Mass that God will be with them now, when they will need Him most, for they are where we were on November 1st, wherever that is. (Bougainville)

0500–Breakfast, after which I sandwich in a half hour sleep before we all take our battle stations. I slip out topside and watch an old maneuver now for us, men going down over the side, this time none of the tenseness we have known on other occasions.

0700–I read the Office for a while, then go topside, look out at all the big ducks with their ducklings around them, scooting here and there, apparently without rhythm or reason, yet all following a definite plan. Oh’s and Ah’s on all sides on the flying bridge up next to the stars as our planes, dozens of them, form an umbrella over us that is constantly changing shape but is always over us.

0745–A stranger with a cross approaches me, “Fr. Foley?” “That’s right.” “Fr. McNeil is my name;

from Syracuse.” “Hello, Father. Syracuse is a great place, suburb of Boston.”

Letter to my sister Kay informing her of the happenings of the day.

Well, Kay, he was sorely in need of a priest to offer Mass ashore, so in about fifteen minutes I was on my way down the net with my kit having preceded me and Fr. McNeil had his shirt stuffed with two boxes of cigars rustled up for him. In we bounded, braced ourselves as the boat hit the beach, then to his tent, meeting some Captain on the way. In about ten minutes we were ripping along the road. Yes, that’s right; the road had been a marsh but the CB’s do the impossible. A sharp right turn, the ocean on our left, just ten yards away; on our right an airstrip and at the end of the mile run, a little cemetery bordered with coconut trees. A makeshift altar rested against a coconut tree for it slanted right in on me very graciously. It wasn’t a thing of beauty for we had just punished it and those around it on November 1. It was just a long stem with no head of fronds waving in the breeze. Can you picture the setting, Kay, the bluest of blue water is boiling in, in mile long breakers just about 30 yards on my left as I begin the Mass? On my right, just ten yards away, planes are intermittently taking off, not on any picnic either. Under my feet is sand; three feet away on the Epistle and Gospel sides are the first graves. My congregation that numbered fifteen when I started is fifty when I turn around to read the Gospel.

Shining down on the whole scene is the hot sun from a cloudless sky. I start to preach a few words on the Gospel despite the competition. As I casually look around the congregation, I am distracted by the face of a boy whom I spot immediately as Terry Geoghegan, who graduated from B.C. year before last.²⁷⁸ He is disguised behind sun glasses

278 Terrence J. Geoghegan was a Navy ensign and a 1942 graduate of Boston College who studied physics and played on two of most successful football teams in the school’s history. Following training at Harvard he became a mobile radar operator in the Pacific Theater. An engineer and business executive, he died in 2006 at age 85.

but I still know him. I am just winding up the talk when there is a roar on my left as a plane takes off into the morning sky. I pause for I know when I am licked; let her roar down the strip and soar up and then I close.

Mass over, Terry comes up and half a dozen other young fellows and a priest with Fr. McNeil. The only boy you know is Bud Hines from Brookline. We had a grand reunion; said his mother was pleased beyond words at your last call and the letter. When you call this time, Kay, tell her that Bud looked marvelously well, although I accused him of wearing a disguise. He had a beautiful handlebar moustache that blossomed red. The priest was none other than Fr. Brock, none the worse for the wear since I last saw him. I unrigged my altar, piled into his jeep with Terry and out we bounced in one of our boats to our ship. Up the side like three bugs, over the rail, up to my room, where they sat down to two cups of ice cream and a glass of coke.

While they feasted on what they thought “they would never see again,” I rustled up a sheep, two hams, four boxes of cigars, five boxes of Oh Henry’s, etc. Then I told them to get off the ship in a hurry unless they wanted to take a trip for which they had made no provisions with their commanding officers. So over the rail and down the side they slid again and were on their way with the duffle they picked up. Our visit was short and sweet on both ends. Well, about this time it was high noon so I snagged a couple of sandwiches, for you see, we eat on the fly on days like this. Said goodbye to the last of the men leaving us and then snatched 40 winks. The afternoon was taken up with the account of the exploits of the men we had put ashore on November 1st somewhere out here; you guess where. A session with the Office, then at 6:00 P.M. my third Mass with about 150 boys fresh from the

shore and happy to be moving away. There they were boys on October 31st. Now every one of them is a man. Since it is still the Christmas season, they sang the Christmas hymns, as on Christmas Day so also today these boys raised the roof. How Our Lord must have been pleased with their songs. 7:00 P.M. – Have a good fat steak and potatoes and asparagus, the regular meal saved for me by the cook. 7:30 P.M. – Confessions for these boys just aboard until nine o’clock. A coke bought on the way up to my room and here I am finishing this letter to you at 10:30 P.M. – Are you tired? If you aren’t, you should be because I am, as this abominable typing indicates. It has progressively gotten worse, and SO, SO, SO, as Ed Wynn used to say, I am going to say my prayers, thanking Our Lord and Our Lady for letting me do another day’s work for them, and then fall asleep. You have good reason for thinking that I typed this with one eye shut.²⁷⁹

Other features to be added, thrilling sight of bombers flying in close packed formation and fighter escorts above and below and alongside of them both port and starboard; I count 74 of them as they roar north to Rabaul. They are all heavily loaded with bombs for their job. They return overhead at 3:30 P.M., 51 of them. May those boys rest in peace who came hurtling through the skies to their deaths or to something worse than death.

A few days ago these bombers went north, our Liberators, with a heavy escort of fighters, and met no opposition. Then, two days later, went north again without an escort. Apparently no need for it. Then, in the meantime, about 150 fighters had been rushed down from the Dutch East Indies by the Japs. The score was 16 Liberators shot out of the skies. Jap losses were undetermined, but not nearly as heavy as ours. Bad mistake in judgment on somebody’s part. Tragedy is that mistakes by Brass Hats are paid for in lives.

²⁷⁹ Ed Wynn (1886–1966) was a popular comedian and actor, whose exit line, which Foley pastiches here, was “Be back in a flash with more trash.”

Captain Jack Delahanty of the Marines comes aboard to be moved south, apparently in excellent health. A brave man, was put ashore in a rubber boat with five Fijian scouts at Empress Augusta Bay, five days before D-Day, November first, from a submarine. Scouted Jap's position and strength. Met 150 natives, saw crucifix, medal of Our Lady around his neck; "Catholique, Catholique," they exclaimed with joy. Every one of them knelt before him, kissed his hands, thought he was a priest, tears of joy in their eyes. He said he couldn't let them down, gave them all an Irish blessing. Knew he was safe in their hands then. Had been touch and go, said his Rosary for five intentions. 1—Thank You for protecting me. 2—To St. Joseph for the grace of a happy death. 3—Souls in Purgatory. 4—Men dying now. 5—Mother's intentions. Recited the "Memorare"²⁸⁰ at night,

"Remember, O Most Gracious," very slowly, "never," etc.

Back on Guadalcanal Lt. Kelliher was saying the Rosary for him every night. Splendid fellow. Day before attack, moved the natives two miles so they wouldn't be massacred by the bombardment that we would make.

MONDAY, JANUARY 10, 1944

0600—Mass. Marines present who had done the fighting on Bougainville since November, fine group of Catholic lads among them. Day is lovely restful one after the hectic moments yesterday. Mass in the morning, Rosary in the afternoon, Confessions at night.

This evening Captain Jack Delahanty and I have a toast together. Then we go out on the boat deck forward when we hear planes overhead. We are anchored again about a mile off Teteri, Guadalcanal.

Night is a cloudy one, with occasional raindrops falling. Moon is making a brave effort to break through but just can't. Over on the shore, tremendously powerful searchlights flash on and off down the runway

for the Liberators taking off into the night. They roar over our heads, their running lights on. As they go by, I bless each one of the eight, asking God to bring them back safe. They douse their lights in a couple of minutes, soon are swallowed up in the darkness of the night and are away on their long distance bombing mission.

Many a prayer is being said for the ten boys in each plane by mothers, wives, sisters and sweethearts back home that God's blessing will also be with them every mile of the way. There is something melancholy about the whole setting and the atmosphere as we stand out on the deck and watch them disappear into the night. Young men, in love with life, to whom killing is alien, bound for a mission whose sole purpose is to wreak death and destruction on an implacable foe. They are gone and the silence of the tropical night wraps everything again. We are alone with our thoughts.

I think of what Terry Geoghegan told me at Torokina [an Allied airport on Bougainville]. One of these bombers couldn't make her base, she was riddled by anti-aircraft over Rabaul, struggled back to Torokina, made a belly landing, pilot and co-pilot dead; gunner brought her in.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 11, 1944

0600—Mass.

We are hidden away from sight of friend and enemy here in this anchorage that used to harbor enemy craft a short 18 months ago. We are in the midst of the rainy season. Small mountains rise up on every side of us. Rain spills out of the clouds, then shuts off after ten minutes or so and steam rises from the earth. Everything is hot, soggy and steamy here. Sun burns even from behind the clouds. Rash starts to pester us again. Need another trip to cure us. Advantage of hideout is also a handicap, cuts off all air, no breeze, just motionless surface of water and warm air.

²⁸⁰ A modern version of "Memorare," a Marian prayer dating to the 15th century,

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 12, 1944

0600–Mass.

Today we take aboard about 200 members of Standard Landing Craft Unit #16. These boys will form Boat Pool 3-12 at our next landing point on enemy held territory. We expect another invasion about March first, either one of the small islands to the north or New Ireland itself.

Presently the Japs are south of us on the Shortland, where one of our task forces bombarded them last Saturday night as we were steaming in at 11:00. How about their airfields, Ballale, Buin, Faisie, Kahili and Kieta still in their hands? Still doing some damage but not what they used to, thank God.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 13, 1944

0600–Mass.

Every night the crew has movies and enjoys them.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 14, 1944

0600–Mass.

Still swinging around the buoy here in Purvis Bay [off Florida Island] with the men practicing boat, division, flotilla and group maneuvers. We should go out before long for AA drill. Report has it that plane attacks on ships at Gilbert Island were severe and prolonged. May be the same at our next attack point, New Ireland???

Happy surprise this afternoon. Tom Quinn B.C. '39 shows up again from the USS Titania; write to his mother to tell her that he is well and happy.²⁸¹

SATURDAY, JANUARY 15, 1944

0600–Mass.

Movies tonight as usual.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 16, 1944

0600–Mass. 0900–Mass. 1600–Mass aboard the USS St. Louis, cruiser, anchored like us in Purvis Bay. Sixteen destroyers here, about four AK's, four merchant ships, one repair and four oil tankers; tremendous concentration of shipping. This is our Advanced Naval Base.

St. Louis had her bow shot off in the battle of Kula Gulf last July. Same happened to cruisers Honolulu and the Leander, a NZ cruiser. Caught her torpedo amidships and had 29 men killed. Honolulu has a queer camouflage job, blue gray paint like ours with black in between two shades of it. Huge seven-shaped daubs of it that run from the waterline right up to the turrets. Captain is an individualist who likes a paint job that is Daliesque in design.²⁸²

Excellent group aboard the St. Louis for Mass. They listen attentively while I tell them the story of Cana and speak of devotion to Our Lady. Mass was offered in the Mess Hall since both of her planes were stacked in the hangar below, the norm for Mass.

MONDAY, JANUARY 17, 1944

0630–Mass.

Today is the same as all the other days we have experienced here, intermittent rain showers all day long. One result is that when we try to have movies topside, the rain drives us below. Sudden rain squalls that blot everything from view; when it blows over, hot steam rises from the earth, forming thick white clouds.

Alongside the water's edge are camped half a dozen anti-aircraft units, utterly cut off from civilization.

²⁸¹ Quinn also appears in entries for November 17, 1943 and January 25 1944.

²⁸² The *Honolulu* was struck by enemy bomb or torpedo three times during the war: once at Pearl Harbor, once in the battle that Foley references, and then again during the Battle of Leyte, in October 1944. The distinctive paint scheme that Foley references consisted of three sets of steps, one black and two in shades of grey, running from below the water line on the bow up to the midship superstructure. The design appears to have been applied when the *Honolulu* was repaired after Pearl Harbor. Foley's entry here and under January 30, 1944 would indicate that captains determined how their ships would be painted.

Day in and day out nothing but the gray monotony of what must seem to them a purposeless existence.

TUESDAY, JUNE 18, 1944

0630–Mass.

Today the ultimate in contrasts of shipping. A native canoe, without any outboard rigger, filled with three Solomon Islanders, paddled by us, an 18,000 ton modern 20th century steamship.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 19 TO SATURDAY, JANUARY 22, 1944.

Still anchored at Purvis Bay.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 23, 1944

0630–Mass. 0900–Mass. 1000–General Service.

We lifted anchor this morning at 0700 so I had to cancel arrangements to offer the Holy Sacrifice on the USS St. Louis and the USS Honolulu, two cruisers that have anchored here for some time.

Out we go to the Iron Bottom Bay for fleet maneuvers with the other five ships in our transport division. We zig and we zag, we have emergency turns, we run full steam astern to avoid imaginary collisions, we execute evasive actions to avoid bombers, imaginary, coming in on us at all angles and so Sunday passes.

MONDAY, JANUARY 24, 1944

0630–Mass.

Dry runs today on imaginary attacking planes. All ships “fire” as planes come in on us. Is wearisome for the men; they like to fire live ammunition.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 25, 1944

Fleet maneuvers as usual today. At 1:30 P.M. live ammunition runs, sleeve being towed by a plane. Lasts two hours, during which three sleeves are shot down by our five ships steaming in Indian file.

I go topside up to the flying bridge deck between starboard and port batteries, just aft of smokestack and can look down on five other batteries aft.

Sleeve comes into view, guns start to chatter, flame spurts angrily from mouth of guns at canvas sleeve, black blossoms fill the summer air from the three-inch guns, tracers make a line of red fire as they head into the target. Air is filled with acrid smell of cordite from three-inch guns. Tom Quinn comes aboard at 5:30 and informs me that he is going back to the States.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 26, 1944

Mr. McRae, Communications Officer Cmdr. of Mobile, Alabama, informs me that tomorrow he leaves to report to his new ship in Boston after, he hopes, 30 days leave. Day is another one of anti-aircraft firing practice for the men on all the guns, all the ships taking part in it, as well as practice on surfaced submarines with five-inch and three-inch guns. USS Libra knocks sleeve down on first shot.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 27, 1944

0630–Mass for Mrs. Townsend who died a year ago today, mother of Mr. Townsend, Electrician’s Warrant Officer.

Again fleet maneuvers and firing practice. This afternoon our men knock down the sleeve towed by the plane on the first burst; cheer from the men topside. Read article today in an issue of *Commonweal*, in which Emmet Lavery stated that man was part hero and part heel, he had one foot in the mud and the other in the stars; in other words, he was a being made up of two elements, body and soul.²⁸³

FRIDAY, JANUARY 28, 1944

0630–Mass.

Fleet maneuvers again today. In the afternoon invasion of Malita shore by all boats in the task force.

²⁸³ Lavery was an award-winning playwright and screenwriter.

Read in a book today that swearing is made up of emotional expressions of inarticulate people with small vocabularies. “A Tree Grows in Brooklyn”.²⁸⁴

SATURDAY, JANUARY 29, 1944

0300—Reveille for pre-dawn invasion. Last day grand dress rehearsal goes off very smoothly without a single casualty. But in the real thing, how many?

SUNDAY, JANUARY 30, 1944

0630—Mass. 0900—Mass. 1000—General Service.

We are underway at 6 o'clock so I had to forego my intention of having Mass aboard two other ships this morning. Out we venture with our escorts leading the way.

Day is a lovely one as usual with blue sky overhead, blue water under our keel, ships on both sides of us; a newcomer, the USS Rochambeau, a straight transport running between here and the States. She presents a striking contrast with the other grayish blues of the ships for she is many-hued. The skipper must be a rugged individualist.

Off in the distance is a long island that has tier upon tier of mountains rising up from it. Then tier upon tier of cottony clouds, like Alps themselves, rise over the land mountains and over all the blue canopy of God's sky. How He scatters beauty with a lavish hand.

MONDAY, JANUARY 31, 1944

0630—Mass.

Sgt. Snyder, Marine attached to the ship, informs me, when we are speaking about the firing practice of last week, that he was frightened almost beyond

endurance. Once when we were being bombed and his station was on the 5" gun aft, the first bomb just missed the stern. His first inclination was to run for protection. But he mastered the desire and stood his ground the same as the rest of the men.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 1944

0630—Mass.

Aboard we have a PT Squadron and Lt. Commander [Robert] Kelly, [the subject] of “They Were Expendable” fame. Quiet blond Irishman who is fearlessly brave from his repeated encounters with the enemy.²⁸⁵

Also have Argus 5 Radar outfit with Terry Geoghegan aboard. We chat about times gone by on the Heights and about my Mass on Bougainville on January 9th. That jungle! Thick wall of trees, clotted vines, hanging branches, slimy marsh and rotten tree trunks and everything colored a sickly green underfoot, the rays of sunshine filtering down, having lost all their strength and bright brilliance in making the journey down from the sun.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 1944

0630—Mass.

This morning we cut through Havana Straits never before traversed by a ship our size. A small canal, New Caledonia mountains on either side of us; a cut of about two miles we slide through, zigzagging here and there; bare mountains, no vegetation on them, only at water's edge where is square of flat land. Occasionally a clump of palms bravely raise their heads.

²⁸⁴ The 1943 novel by Elisabeth Lillian Wehner (she published under the name Betty Smith) concerns the life of an impoverished, striving family in Brooklyn, New York, in the early part of the 20th century. A story of hope, the book struck home with an American public that had been through the Depression and was now involved in a draining war. It was a best-seller and was widely distributed by the Armed Forces.

²⁸⁵ Published in 1942, William White's best-selling *They Were Expendable: An American Torpedo Boat Squadron in the U.S. Retreat from the Philippines* followed the ultimately tragic fate of a Torpedo Boat squadron during the disastrous Philippine Campaign, from December 8, 1941 to May 8, 1942, when some 78,000 American troops surrendered to Japanese invaders. It was later made into a movie directed by John Ford and starring Robert Montgomery and John Wayne, who plays the Robert Kelly role but under the name Rusty Ryan. Though critically acclaimed, the movie, deliberately released on December 7, 1945, did not find an audience in a nation weary of war.

At 2:30 P.M. we drop anchor; ashore to see Ed, no contact. Tomorrow better luck.

7:30 P.M.—Received mail, among the letters one from the Bureau of Naval Personnel, informing me that my orders were on the way. Letter is dated December 15th, so before long I should be pulling up my anchor for a new duty. Where???

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 1944

0630—Mass.

Ashore at 0800 to see Ed. Put through a telephone call. We make a date at 1045. Wander around Noumea until ten, call Sister Joseph, then later meet Ed at the Navy Landing. We walk down to the park in the center of town and sit on a bench where we chew the fat about persons, places and things back home. I inform him about my change of duty on the way. He is happy and looks forward to a return home himself at the end of six months when his two years out here will be over.

We leave at 1200, have a coke and an ice cream by the side of the road, then I hop into the boat for the ship at 1:30. Shake hands, “So long, Ed.” He walks away, the dead image of our father in his walk. As we move out into the harbor, he waves his hand in a final salute and we have parted for good? Hope that when we finish our stay in Wellington that we return to Noumea so we can meet again. I want to get Ed a radio if possible.

Underway at 4 P.M. with the Formahault, Libra, Crescent City, Titania and three destroyers, our escort. We head directly south into a smooth sea. As we go out by the lighthouse, I try to pick out Ed’s camp ashore but have no luck. He can see us but not we them.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 1944

Aboard still have PT men, Squadron #19 and some New Zealanders being evacuated home for sickness. Day is much cooler and sea is rolling a bit.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 1944

0630—Mass.

Rough sea today head on and a strong wind. We pitch quite a bit making some of the sailors a bit seasick. In the morning the freighters, AK’s Titania and Libra, leave us for Auckland. Now we are on our own without any escort. We are making good speed. Day is sunshiny without much warmth, a white sun and sky.

USS Formahault can’t keep up with us, so she drops behind while we go on our own, with the Crescent City hitting 16 knots against a strong head wind and a running sea.

1145 – Pay a visit to the Captain, which has some startling consequences. Showed him the notice I had received that my orders were on the way. Remarked, “Well, we were just about to get to know each other when you leave.” “Yes, it looks as though I shall be leaving before long.” Then handed me three typewritten sheets with liberty regulations for the men in Wellington. One section was headed as follows:

“Venereal Disease: Overlooking the after-effects of Venereal Disease on your life and health, a man on the sick list due to not taking the necessary precautions during and after sexual intercourse is a damned slacker. He becomes a burden to his country in time of war instead of pulling his own weight in the war effort. A green box with a red cross painted on it will be handy to the gangway and will contain sanitubes. If you feel that there is any possibility of exposure, take a couple with you. This is not to encourage intercourse but to provide you with some protection. In addition you must report to the sick bay on return to the ship, sign the book, and take supervised treatment.” I handed back the sheets to the Captain and said I could not give my approval to that section.

“Why not?”

“What you intend is an insult to every decent clean-minded man aboard this ship, besides an

encouragement to vice.” “Be practical.” “Not by flying in the face of God’s law.” “Fornication is not forbidden in the Bible!” “Shocked by your ignorance.” “State law doesn’t arrest a man for it.”

“State doesn’t make morality, God does, etc., etc. You don’t encourage stealing. ‘If you’re going to steal, here’s the way to avoid being caught.’ I have friends in Wellington, Captain. What you are doing will get around to these people. They will ask me, ‘Is it true what I hear about your ship and that box on the quarterdeck?’ I will hang my head in shame and say ‘yes’ and they will say, ‘Well, you have some Captain.’ I had intended speaking on this very subject tomorrow, Sunday, to the men. Now I must speak on it. I send letters home to parents of these boys informing them that they have been attending Church services. Suppose I send a copy of what you have written to them and to higher authorities, what do you think their reaction would be?”

“Parents would approve.”

“I disagree with you there most emphatically. Fifteen girls pregnant in Wellington on last trip from Marines. You know that those Marines are now lying at Tarawa. You will be the means of bringing the same tragedy into other lives if you carry out your intention. Furthermore, you will have to answer to Almighty God for your action.”

“Have a lot to answer for. Further, I did this on other ships.”

“That does not make it right. Captain, had it been done without consulting me, I would have been up here immediately, for I have a solemn obligation to oppose it. You put this in the notes and it will be the talk of the ship and men will ask, ‘I wonder what the Chaplain thinks of this.’ I shall publicly proclaim my opposition to it and the immorality of it. Now I register my most emphatic disapproval of it.”

Captain retorted, “Registered.”

This interview confirmed previous observations of officers and men. This new skipper, one month old, is tainted with a most undesirable streak of sarcasm. What I did not know is that his moral ignorance is so appalling.

Later inquired of senior medical officers if there were a high rate of venereal disease aboard. Did not ask Captain, for whether high or low, still, suggested actions immoral. Doctor reported four cases on our last liberty of two weeks at Auckland, four out of 529 men. If it had been a large percentage, could understand but not excuse his distorted reasoning.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 1944

0630–Mass. 0900–Mass. 1000–General Service.

At all services spoke on subject of man’s sexual relations with women. Topic an urgent one in view of what my Captain’s professed policy is, should my orders come through shortly. Gave right and wrongness of sexual relations, obligations of single men, abstinence of married men, fidelity to their wives. ²⁸⁶ And words of St. Paul, 1st Corinthians, Chapter 6. “Men, if anybody speaks differently, counsels differently, makes it easier to act differently, makes temptation easier by putting in your path the means of avoiding the consequences of misdeeds, no matter who that man is, whether he is low or high, whether seaman second class, whether wearing two stripes of gold braid, or four, or an admiral’s, that man is going against God’s law. Have nothing to do with him or his doctrine which is hot from hell.”

Aftermath: 1. Captain not present at Church.
2. Just before dinner at noon, Dr. Walker came into my room, said that he was pleased with the sermon at the General Service this morning. He has been sick at heart seeing the way some of the officers carry on. “It took courage to deliver that sermon. I admire you for it.” “My obligation is to deliver it, Doctor.”

²⁸⁶ “Keep away from sexual immorality. All other sins that people may commit are done outside the body; but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. Do you not realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you and whom you received from God?”

3. Navigation Officer Paul Myers in Dr. Walker's room that night remarked that he went by Captain's emergency cabin yesterday while I was in there. Saw look of amazement on Captain's face; wondered what I was saying to him. "Straightening him up on his morals." "You are the first man who has talked up to him. He came into the chart room after you left, highly indignant, remarked, 'Chaplain is opposed to a prophylactic box on quarterdeck. I wanted to throw him out of my room. He said it was opposed to his beliefs.'" "Opposed to my beliefs, which are God's also. They were God's before they were mine." Myers, "He'll be glad to see you leave the ship." Self, "I told him that if the President contemplated such action, he would have to be opposed."

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 1944
0630–Mass.

Not much sleep during the night, for we were bucking a 54 mile headwind. It killed our speed to about two knots and made us pitch badly.

Day is like a November football one at home. Clear blue sky with a cool but not cold wind blowing. Giant seagulls are following us, have tremendous wing spread of four feet overall, with black bands marking the tip.

Islands begin to appear on starboard side. Ninety passengers, New Zealanders, overjoyed to see their homeland again. Some of them have been away for over three years. They are Vella Lavella veterans and Treasury Island men as well. Their average age is about 43, rather high for soldiering in the Solomons. Saw some statistics on the rainfall at Bougainville today; is 124 inches a year. Their seasons: wet, wetter, wettest. We can vouch for the storms we had on three of our four trips we made to Empress Augusta Bay. Visited the M.S. convent with some linens to be washed. Mother Theophile informed me that Bishop Wade wrote her informing her that both Frs. Lebele and Fluitt were back at Noumea, thanks to the machinations of the Australian overseers who wish to have complete charge of the native boys. Resent the good influence of the priests, missionaries.

They prevent exploitation of the natives. However, he intends to see Admiral Halsey to endeavor to have the situation straightened out.

Visited Miss Duggan this evening. She and her sister, Mary and Mac are fine. Eileen has a letter which she intends to write my mother through me. I took it on condition that I send it unread.

Start making arrangements for another dance for the men. No corsages this time, according to Captain M. T. Farrar.

Good to be in the city again, to hear the sounds of the streets, the policemen's whistles, the car horns, the clang of the tram car bells. Good to walk down the streets, to go into the stores, to linger over a counter, to look at the ads. Good to be part of the brisk rhythm of the city again.

A light today about sanctity. "A saint is one who suddenly finds that something he may have been taking for granted suddenly blazes up inside him, and that something is the love of God and the fire once started is never extinguished, but grows in intensity as long as the saint lives."

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 1944
0630–Mass.

Took the tram to Wadestown this afternoon; tram U's its way around these shores. Rises over the top, then leaves one with a short mile walk into a "scenic reserve," as it was called. Here native shrubs and trees abound, such as blistered myrtle, honeysuckle trees, etc.

It was late afternoon as I pursued the devious windings of the path down in the gorge between the rugged hills. The scenery was very soothing. One side of a gorge would be shrouded in shadow, the other bathed in the late afternoon sun which sets at quarter of eight here now. One stand of pines is amazingly thick. It was a hand and knee operation to navigate up its thick carpet. A green cathedral was the impression it created; so thick was the umbrella it put up that only an occasional shaft of sunlight penetrated through. The brook running along the gorge was for

the most part, quiet, except when a stone objected to its forward progress; then said brook became quite voluble as it forced its way past. The only ones sharing the afternoon with me were the birds that silently flew here and there with an occasional fantail cheeping like a chickadee back home.

Peace and happiness were in the air. As Eileen Duggan writes, “The green calm flowed in and around me.” Such a lovely contrast to the scenes we were witnessing of late up north in the Solomons.

The climate here now is late summer. Days are delightful, evenings on the coolish side, people as hospitable as ever.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 1944

0630–Mass.

Finally manage to book the Majestic Cabaret for our ship’s dance next Wednesday and Thursday evenings.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 1944

0630–Mass.

Trying to extricate Sailor Escudero from trouble; breaking and entering. Drunk again!!!

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 1944

0630–Mass.

Dinner this evening with the Duggans. Later Fr. Blake and Fr. Kennedy dropped in. Former had attended *Campion* in Oxford; we had met many mutual friends over there.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 1944

0630–Mass.

Date with Fr. Noel Gascoigne²⁸⁷ for lunch with Archbishop [Thomas] O’Shea at his Episcopal Residence. Time 12:30. Dr. forgot all about the date, supposed to

pick me up, slipped his mind. “Happens in the best of families.” He rushed down after I had my dinner, drove me to his house, failed to see the Archbishop. Housekeeper much put out with Dr. Gascoigne. “Her splendid meal went untouched by American naval chaplain.”

Arranged for Mass aboard the *Formahault* and the *LST* for tomorrow. Heard confessions aboard the *Formahault*.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 1944

0530–Mass aboard our ship. 0615–Mass aboard the *Formahault*.

0730–Mass aboard the *LST*.

In the evening, dinner with Frs. Blake and Kennedy at St. Patrick’s College²⁸⁸ in Wellington. Ten other priests joined the recreation for a couple of hours. Good to be among priests again and to relax among them swapping yarns about seminary days.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 1944

0630–Mass.

Made preparations to baptize three Mess Attendants on Wednesday at St. Mary’s Church. Dance details being attended to, printing of programs, flowers, etc.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 1944

0630–Mass.

Out to Fr. McGlynn’s St. Columban’s residence, ten miles outside the city for a delightful dinner with him and Frs. O’Shea and Cunningham and Fr. Seward, an Anglican convert with his lay brother. We walked around the lovely grounds before dinner, admiring the profusion of flowers, rhododendrons, hydrangeas, lilies of the valley, roses, etc.

²⁸⁷ Gascoigne was a diocesan priest and director of Catholic schools in Wellington.

²⁸⁸ A Marist secondary school

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 1944

0630–Mass.

Men today agog with preparations for the dance this evening. Confusion with Fr. Maurice Foley finally ironed out to the satisfaction of both parties.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 1944

0630–Mass.

Dance again tonight; just as pleasant as last night, no untoward incident of any kind, thank heavens. Management and men and officers enjoyed themselves. Captain at his table, “Chaplain, it does my heart good to hear the men say to me, ‘Good evening, Captain.’ I love all those men,” he says, “They don’t know it yet, but they will one of these days.”

Poor man doesn’t know how they love him. Reminds me of what the Rector, Gomez, wrote to St. Francis Xavier. He was head of the Seminary at Goa, a sprig of a lad brought out from Portugal to head it. Thought St. Francis a bit on the slow side, not new enough in his methods, etc. Ruled with an iron hand; had to be censured by Xavier. Gomez wrote back, “I’m not interested in learning that you love the men, but in finding out whether or not the men love you.”

If the Captain only knew!!! Some of the men of the 1st Division managed to obtain hold of his gin bottles. They emptied them of three quarters of their contents and poured water back in!

Man sidled up and said [of Foley] to the Captain, “Great guy, Chaplain; now we are losing him. Never get another like him.”

Captain, “Nonsense, son, we’ll get another and he will be a lot better.” Good thing I’m not sensitive! I smiled and answered, “I sincerely hope so, Captain, for the sake of the men.”

He is still smarting from the interview of February 5th about venereal disease. After he had a couple of

drinks, he stopped me as I was maneuvering around the Officers’ table and said, “Chaplain, when we had that talk, I was thinking of the fighting efficiency of the ship.” I said nothing, but gave him a non-committal smile. That was no place to reopen the discussion. If he wants to see me later aboard ship about it, fine, “Barcus is willing.”²⁸⁹

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 1944

0630–Mass.

Aboard ship this afternoon, Miss Duggan, her sister and Fr. Gascoigne for about an hour, then went for a drive and had tea at their residence.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 1944

0630–Mass.

Arranged for Masses aboard the Formahault. British aircraft carrier attended to by Fr. Gascoigne.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 1944

0630–Mass aboard the Formahault tied up forward of us. Mass aboard our ship.

1200–High noon. Lovely summer day. Alone I decided to take a train out into the country, one hour ride all the way to Upper Hutt, a lovely valley nestling between mountains towering on either side of it. A day when the world is completely at peace. We twist and turn and finally arrive at Maidstone Park where the ticket taker asks me if I am a member of the Lower Hutt Workingmen’s Club who are having their annual picnic. Lovely afternoon; hear the shrill ring of the bagpipes. Under each tree are parked families with the inevitable pot of tea; youngsters running races, men playing cricket on three different pitches. I wander around enjoying the scene of happiness far from the maddening flashes of modern warfare.

In the evening to Miss Duggan’s and to 22 Vivian Street, the Catholic Seamen’s Club where I met Fr. Noel Gascoigne.

²⁸⁹ “Barkis is willin” is a phrase often repeated by the ever-accommodating “Mr. Barkis,” a character in Dickens’ *David Copperfield*.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 1944

Underway about noon for Auckland with the PT-19 with us again, their period of recreation and liberty over once more.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 1944

0630–Mass. Distribution of ashes for it is Ash Wednesday.

Ashore to see Fr. Hunt and Fr. Murphy of Church of the Good Shepherd.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 1944

0630–Mass.

0730–Underway. Have aboard the 7th and 161st Infantry with Frs. Scannell and McGoldrick, Chaplains. We have three Masses in the morning. Men are a tired group after their three weeks of recreation and liberty in New Zealand. Once again they will go on maneuvers before engaging in another attack.

**FRIDAY AND SATURDAY,
FEBRUARY 25 AND 26, 1944**

Not much to report save the sea is unusually calm for this stretch of the ocean. Customary for us to roll and pitch in these parts. Temperature is mild, too; a sudden change from the cool weather below.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 1944

0630, 0730, 0900–Masses. 1000–General Service. 2:00–Moored to Nickel Docks, Noumea.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 1944

0630–Mass.

I called up Ed last night and made a date with him for today. He comes aboard and looks splendidly, thank God. He wants to know if he can bring a party aboard Wednesday; Misses Burns, Kissege, and Bradford, Army Nurses. Sure thing! Ed and I visit Sister Joseph, who enjoys the presence of both of us

together. She collects some fare from me, chocolate rations for her poor.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 29, 1944

0630–Mass.

Quiet day with taking care of odds and ends for men. Insurance, brothers ashore who want to make contacts, marriage papers!! Two men want to marry two girls from the Pitcairn Islands whom they met in Wellington. They are daughters of Englishmen settlers there, both cousins and very lady-like. “After the last war it was Nordhoff and Hall. After this one it will be Arnold and Stroud,” I tell the two boys.²⁹⁰

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 1, 1944

0630–Mass.

Ed and his party of Army nurses and Joe Walsh come aboard this afternoon. Take them over the ship. They evidence particular interest in the sick bay. Are fascinated with our ship’s excellent appointments. They would like to be aboard it for permanent duty. They invite me out to their camp.

THURSDAY, MARCH 2, 1944

630–Mass.

Fr. [Patrick] Duffy, CB Chaplain, comes aboard about 1100, stays for dinner. We leave together at 1230 for shore, in the meantime having slipped down the harbor four miles to our old anchorage. Just as we are about to leave, Fr. Curnane from the USS Biddle comes aboard. He also goes to town with us.

Fr. Duffy takes me to country to St. Louis Mission where I meet native Sisters studying in postulancy and three Marist Sisters. Approach along long coconut-palm lined road. Straight ahead almost at the end of it, mountains rising sheer, so much so that it seemed that they were about to take off. Intense green color contrasted sharply with deep blue of the sky. Went through native village, houses

²⁹⁰ Charles Nordorf and James N. Hall were American soldiers who settled in Polynesia after WW I and together wrote three popular novels centered on the *Bounty* mutiny. Presumably, Arnold and Stroud were the surnames of the American soldiers who sought “marriage papers” from Foley.

of mud, men work in rice paddies, women take care of house, all barefooted and smiling as we make our way through the compound. Tropical flowers growing in profusion all around us; purple bougainvillea, gorgeous orchids by the hundreds and half a dozen other flowers whose names I couldn't find out. After a pleasant hour visit, then out to see Ed. His camp is pitched half way up a mountain bare of trees that is very steep. Red mud in abundance and row after row of cots for sick patients' wards. Ed and I and Joe Walsh and Charlie Bushwah have some pictures taken together. As we look around we catch a glorious view out to sea. From our vantage point we can look out to sea and catch five huge ships riding in from the horizon. Off in the distance almost lost in the haze is the white pencil of a lighthouse that guided us in from the sea. To the left of us and right of us and behind are mountains, before us the ocean, luxuriant growth of green hillocks with their shrubbery.

After leaving Ed and Fr. Schenler, chaplain, we motor down the road. Lovely sunset has made cerise sky in the west and lazy clouds are drifting across the face of the sun, flushed through and through with color. Mountains on our left are purple in their twilight glow. We turn in at the Bishop's Residence, a narrow lane, make another sharp turn, mount the steps and find Brother Paul, a Marist, on the steps.

In a couple of minutes Bishop [Thomas S.] Wade comes out.²⁹¹ We kneel to kiss his episcopal ring as he greets us all smiles. He is a small man in stature but what he lacks in stature he makes up in character. His face has the quiet strength of a man who has known suffering yet he is remarkably young looking. I had expected to meet a man about fifty or fifty-five, a man aged by the suffering of his flock like Bishop Aubin in Guadalcanal, yet Bishop Wade hardly looks more than forty. Instantly he put me at my ease. He was wearing a long white Bishop's cassock with red buttons and a silver pectoral cross. I told him that I

would be going back to Boston and wanted to know if he wanted me to carry any message to Bishop Cushing. He answered, "Tell him to do what he can to end my exile. People up there need us badly, yet the Australian government will not allow us to return. Forced me out. Head of their Intelligence Service invited me to leave; said I wished to stay. A few days later two officers came early in the morning to my hideout, inquired if I had made up my mind; said that I would like to talk it over. They said the time for talking was ended, so I went with them and came out by a submarine at the appointed rendezvous. They did not want anybody left on the island after they themselves left, so removed us. Have been to see Admiral Halsey, but he asserts military reasons prevent his granting permission to return.

"Furthermore, Seventh Day Adventists, Latter Day Saints are pestering him to go back. Grant permission to one of them, then must to all. Why the opposition of Australians? They resent the good work of the missionaries who are the sole protectors of the natives against exploitation by the whites. In any kind of trouble, the natives always come to the priests."

FRIDAY, MARCH 3, 1944

First Friday.

In this harbor are portents of busier days ahead. There are 19 PA's [attack personnel transports] swinging around the buoy as we are; there are numerous KA's [attack cargo transports] and small escort craft. Presage an invasion in the not remote future. We wonder where the Hunter Liggett, the American Legion and the Fuller are, ships in our division that went home last November. We have heard that the first two may have been condemned for further attack work because of their poor condition. Scuttlebutt has New Ireland, Kavieng, Ravaul, Nauru and Kapa, etc. as our next attack point. One guess is as good as another.

²⁹¹ Thomas S. Wade (1893–1969) was a Rhode Island native and missionary who served as bishop of the Northern Solomon Islands from 1930 to 1960. He was imprisoned by the Japanese in the fall of 1942, but later freed. He was then evacuated by submarine on the orders of American and Australian military authorities who believed that the Japanese would execute him and his fellow clergy as spies..

SATURDAY, MARCH 4, 1944

Day is spent getting ready for church services tomorrow. I visit the Sumpter with Chaplain Brown and the Leedstown with Chaplain A. A. Reed, who exchanges with me. He is a Congregationalist.

SUNDAY, MARCH 5, 1944

0630–Mass aboard the Clymer.

0900–Mass aboard the Clymer.

1030–Mass aboard the Leedstown, the ship taking the place of the Formahault, ship too slow for our division. Coming back to ship in Leedstown's gig, I hear confessions of three Catholic members of gig who expressed regret that they had not been able to make either Mass or Confession.

MONDAY, MARCH 6, 1944

0600–Mass.

Out to camp to see Ed. He makes date to see me on Wednesday aboard the ship.

TUESDAY, MARCH 7, 1944

0630–Mass.

Call up Ed to inform him that date tomorrow must be cancelled; we are shoving off for the Solomons again.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 8, 1944

0600–Mass.

Morrow is a quiet one as we embark 1000 Marines who comprise the 14th Defense Battalion and 600 of whom are casuals on the way north as replacements. They barge out on pride of PAD's a good two hours trip from the Quai Grand at Noumea for we are out anchored in Dumbea Harbor. They re hot, thirsty and tired as they come aboard and flop on the nearest open part of the deck.

About 4:30 P.M. we get underway. I can catch sight for the first time of Ed's camp at 5:30. I identify it by the circular officers' clubhouse with its grass roof. If

Ed had a pair of binoculars, he would be able to pick out our ship very well. Our long glass picks up his camp from behind the island which girt the coast line. When shall we meet again? One guess is as good as the other. I venture the following: Around the latter part of April, after another major invasion. My relief will not have shown up by that time, for our new supply officer informs me that he was one month sitting in Frisco before he was able to obtain transportation. I hope to be able to get down to New Zealand again before shipping for home. One more visit with Ed and then eastward bound. Yesterday the West Point [a troop transport ship] and a Dutch ship pulled in and out with big loads of personnel aboard. Former makes Stateside in 14 days, very, very fast.

THURSDAY, MARCH 9, 1944

0630–Mass with Marines present.

In the afternoon we have Stations of the Cross with Confessions immediately following and Confessions again in the evening at 1900.

FRIDAY, MARCH 10, 1944

0630–Mass.

Same routine as yesterday with promise to write a letter to folks of men who attend Mass and receive Holy Communion. Fr. Zachar is chaplain of these men. He is now aboard the Leedstown, one of our convoy. Others are Crescent City, Fomalhaut, Libra, with our escorts up front sniffing back and forth across the ocean for any lurking submarines. We have AA practice against a sleeve. Open mouth and stop ears to lessen force of concussion on eardrums; lasts for two hours, 7–9 A.M. Early morning sky pockmarked with black bursts of hundreds of exploding shells. Not long before they dissolve and sky is intense blue again.

1415–Stations of the Cross, Shop Area; excellent turnout.

SATURDAY, MARCH 11, 1944

0630–Mass, with the usual excellent turnout of Marines.

In the afternoon at half past two we have Stations of the Cross in the Shop Area. Men turn out handsomely. Hear confessions after and then also in the evening.

SUNDAY, MARCH 12, 1944

0445–Mass.

Unloading day again on Sunday; wrecks Church for remainder of day.

I hit the deck at 0430; rig Church, beautiful full moon lighting up surface of the ocean. Over off our port side, Guadalcanal is sound asleep, with a few streaks of pale light behind the shoulder of one of the high mountains, harbingers of a day that will soon be born. Write a letter to my mother about half past eight. Pack typewriter in sea chest, hence will now scrawl.

MONDAY, MARCH 13, 1944

0630–Mass.

Still unloading 14th Defense Battalion.

TUESDAY, MARCH 14, 1944

0630–Mass.

0800–My relief, Chaplain W. Woolard comes aboard. A “Disciple of Christ” from Texas. I have word passed to Catholic men about my last Mass tomorrow. Confessions tonight.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 15, 1944

0630–Mass. Say goodbye to men at end of Mass. Not easy after being 21 months together.²⁹²

1200–Dinner. Kip Morey delivers farewell greeting at dinner for Officers. I respond.

1:30 P.M.–Leave ship. Strange feeling to pull away from her for last time. Go over to dock at Tulagi.

3:30 P.M.–Across Steel Bottom Bay to Lunga, Guadalcanal in 500 ton APC.²⁹³

7:30 P.M. – Billed at Lunga in Quonset hut. Meet Fr. Bob Minton who has lost 40 pounds since Christmas at Auckland. What a hell-hole this is!!!

THURSDAY, MARCH 16, 1944

0715–Mass.

1000–Ride around periphery of whole coast line of Guadalcanal in SBD-Douglas dive bomber with Navy pilot, Joe Costigan, B.C. '40, Sachem Street, Roxbury. Jeep to revetment on Henderson Field. Two AMMs [dive-bombers] stand by. Don parachute, helmet. “All clear. Contact crank engine.” Aim of trip: discover traces, smoke, etc. of pilot lost two days previous. Roar of engine mounts. Taxi out to runway. Joe talking into phone to me. “Two balls on Control Tower; use runway #2-one.” Cloudless blue sky. Down turn into one, then gives her the gun. Up, up over the coconut groves laid out in perfectly straight lines. Go east, south, north, west.

Joe, over the telephone, “Dense jungle there, Father. Hate to get lost in that.”

Self: “Smoke over there, Joe?”

Joe: “We’ll take a look.” Takes her over, down. Just a native hut. We meet a Liberator from Carney Field, all guns manned, topside blister gunner sitting facing aft ready for business; 19 or 20 years old. We exchange a wave of hand; lot of meaning in that exchange. Bless plane that it may return from mission. We fly wing tip for about three minutes. “Great ship, Father,” says Joe over telephone to me. We slip under it, drop down. She is directly over me, like an elevator going down.

We buzz a destroyer. Into a dive. “All set, Father?” “Let ‘er go.” Rocks her over. Down, straight down;

²⁹² Of all the understatement in Fr. Foley’s diary, this may well be the champion. He was far more open about the emotional weight of war years later, in his spring 1995 interviews with Steve O’Brien for *Blackrobe in Blue*.

²⁹³ A cargo-transport ship used in the Pacific Theater.

stomach saying “hello” to mouth. Swoops in and over, then up; felt like a sack of lead.

“Take a look at that mission.” Red corrugated tin roof. Circle it for look. Half a dozen houses cluster it. Mission Center.

In over jungle, high up. Down to shore; natives wave to us, we drop wing in return. To Cape Esperance;²⁹⁴ two Jap subs, one large, one small; five transports beached. Then over to Tulagi; buzzed ships, Clymer, back to Henderson. What a thrill.

FRIDAY, MARCH 17, 1944

0715–Mass. Visiting old shipmates at Boat Pool.

SATURDAY, MARCH 18, 1944

0715–Mass.

0900–Confessions. Eight Solomon Islanders, red, yellow hair, large loin cloths.

SUNDAY, MARCH 19, 1944

0645–Mass. Lunga-NOB145. 0900–Mass. Kukum–4th Spec. Sea Bees.

1330–Aboard USS Tryon²⁹⁵ for Noumea trip.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 22, 1944

Arrive Noumea. Receiving ship. 6000 men. Chow line mile long before Mass, same after. Movies on side of hill, lights stabbing darkness.

Visit with Ed. His victory garden. Radishes, tomatoes, carrots, cukes, nasturtium, azaleas, sweet peas. His radio plays “Red Sails in the Sunset.”

FRIDAY, MARCH 24, 1944

Ed and I go out to beach at Anse Vita. Then dinner with Frs. McGowan and McLeod at MOB [Main Operating Base] 5. Fr. Mac, “Kiss cobble stones of Boston for me.”

SATURDAY, MARCH 25, 1944

Feast of the Annunciation. Navy Band Concert. Park in Noumea.

MONDAY, MARCH 27, 1944

Ed and I out to beach again. Meet Fr. Barnett, S.J., and McGowan. Dinner together.

FRIDAY, MARCH 31, 1944

Ed and I have a swim at Anse Vata [beach]. Dinner aboard Receiving Station at 5:00. Aboard ship at 10 P.M.

SATURDAY, APRIL 1, 1944

0600–Underway for Golden Gate, Frisco!! Sick passengers. Physically. Mentally, e.g., Marine clutched men piteously when shells mangled men near him. Boy whose nerves shattered again by barrel dropping near him. Wounded, spinal, cerebral, syphilitic.

ITINERARY

March 15, 1944–Detached from USS George Clymer.

March 15, 1944–On Guadalcanal as guest of Fr. Bob Minton of Indianapolis.

March 17, 1944–Flight over Guadalcanal in Douglas dive bomber with Costigan from Sachem Street, Roxbury. Buzzed destroyer; purpose of trip, which consumed two hours, was to try to sight some signal from a pilot who crashed in the jungle or on the beach two days previously. We cruised along the shoreline and over the jungle but no sight of the downed pilot.

March 18, 1944–Heard confessions of eight Solomon Islanders though could not understand a word of what they said.

March 19, 1944–Left on USS Tryon for Noumea, New Caledonia, where Ed and I had nine days together.

March 22, 1944–Arrived Noumea.

April 1, 1944–Aboard USS David Shanks, Army Transport.

April 17, 1944–Arrived in San Francisco. Under the Golden Gate at 0930. Passengers delirious at the sight; 500 of them, 125 psycho patients, 100 of us sound in mind and body, rest wounded.

²⁹⁴ Site of a major naval battle on October 11-12, 1942.

²⁹⁵ An evacuation transport ship.

Naval Medical Center and USS *Vella Gulf*

On Tuesday, May 30, 1944, following a one-month leave in Boston, John Foley began a seven-month tour of duty as a chaplain at the National Naval Medical Center, today's Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, in Bethesda, Maryland. He may have found the work unremarkable as compared with his experiences on the Clymer, and he made only a handful of undated entries while at the facility, including a list of "Experiences in Naval Medical Center."

Remark of Protestant—"Some of my best friends are Catholic, not just one day a week, but seven.

Apgar, wounded aboard the bridge of the USS Texas off the Normandy Coast, lost one leg below the knee, other in bad way also. Asked him how many blood transfusions he had. "Wish I never had any."

Jensen, dying of cancer of the bronchial tubes, listed as a Catholic. Asked if he wanted to go to Confession and Communion. Puzzled expression, said he wasn't a Catholic. Checked with mother; mixed marriage, that boy brought up by an uncle, a Lutheran. Trying to catch the last word; hardly strength to whisper message. "Give my best to everybody."

Russian member of Soviet Embassy broke neck swimming. Introduced self as priest; I inquired what he was. Although he understood and spoke English up to that point, answer, "Sorry, I do not understand." Same of two of his friends whom I met in the passageway.

WAVE loaned \$166 to two sailors for liberty, and to one who wanted "to buy flowers for his wife's grave."

Foley lobbied to be returned to sea, and in January 1945 he was assigned to the USS Vella Gulf, an aircraft carrier that was being built in Washington State. Named for an American Naval victory in the Solomon Islands in August 1943, the Vella Gulf carried 34 aircraft comprising torpedo bombers and fighters, and a crew of more than 1,000. She was commissioned on April 9 and, with Foley on board, was engaged in sea trials off the coast near San Diego when word of the German surrender was received.

TUESDAY, MAY 8, 1945

Service of Thanksgiving for Victory in Europe aboard the USS Vella Gulf.

0800—General Quarters. Emergency drill.

0930—Bugler sounded attention before ship's company was dismissed from General Quarters.

ATTENTION ALL HANDS: This is Fr. Foley, ship's Chaplain speaking. This morning official confirmation was received that the war in Europe is over. In accordance with the wishes of our Commander-in-Chief, President Harry S. Truman, and in prayerful union with millions of our fellow Americans ashore, we stop for a few minutes in our busy lives aboard ship to thank God for the victory that has crowned our arms.

First we shall say a prayer, then pause for a minute of respectful silence in tribute to the men who have died ashore and afloat in the Army and Navy and end with a blessing.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Almighty and everlasting God, Lord of battles, mercifully hear the prayers of us, Thy servants, who turn to Thee in gratitude in this hour of victory for our arms in Europe. We thank Thee that the scourge of war, the blood, the sweat, and the tears will no longer wrack and agonize Thy people and our brothers in arms in that part of the world. Grant that we, who have stern tasks ahead, whose duties call us to the fighting line in another theater, may be strengthened by Thy grace for their courageous execution. May we continue to place our trust in Thee, mindful of Thy words, 'In vain do they build unless the Lord builds with them.' Finally, we ask, O Lord of Mercy, to remember the souls of those who made this victory possible by pouring out the red sweet wine of their youth on the altar of our country's freedom that others may live. Eternal rest grant to them, O Lord, and may perpetual light shine upon them, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

On May 11, at San Diego, aircraft loading was completed, and on the following day, pilots began their trial runs for qualification for carrier duty.

SATURDAY, MAY 12, 1945

Mass as usual at 0600 with attendance of about 50.

1515—Our first plane is catapulted off successfully. Everyone breaks out in a broad smile of relief that she made it, an F4U fighter that sails off directly into the teeth of a strong wind up into the blue of the sky, with the sun glinting off her steel skin.²⁹⁶

Second makes it without a hitch also, with men in colors of the rainbow running here and there on the windswept flight deck, all about their assigned tasks. They are wearing red cloth helmets, green, yellow, white, blue, brown with jerseys to match, all indicating their special job. As yet I don't know what that is, but will learn shortly. Plane director, an officer, speaks a sign language to the pilot as he sits in the cockpit, tunes up his motor with a crescendo that all but deafens, then he swings his hands down vigorously and the war bird is flying.

Plane number three is jockeyed into position on the catapult. The flight officer director goes through his gestures; she spins down to the edge of the flight deck, rears up like a charging horse, turns over, lands with a crash right side up and then drifts by within 15 feet of the port side forward sponson [gun platform], where I am. She is slowly sinking with the cockpit half under water, the pilot slumped over, and blood staining the water around the area.

We feel so helpless, a man slowly sinking under with the cockpit just fifteen feet from us and we are powerless to help. The only part that shows as she drifts by the stern is the tip of her rudder. A young man, 2nd Lt. Edward Groves, USMC, son of Mrs. Susan Groves, 205 South 20th Avenue, Maywood, Ill., has gone to his death. May the Lord have mercy on his soul.²⁹⁷

²⁹⁶ Favored by the Marines in the South Pacific, the F4U Corsair was capable of flying at 400 miles per hour, and adaptable for both land and shipboard use. It was particularly effective against the *Zero*—the most capable of Japanese fighter planes—for which its kill ratio was 11:1. Its main flaw was a long nose which could interfere with pilot vision during shipboard landings. When taxiing the planes, pilots would make “s” turns to improve their ability to see what lay ahead.

²⁹⁷ Edward Clifford Grove was 25 years old. He'd been an inspector in a tractor factory prior to joining the Marines in 1942. He was survived by his parents and three sisters. His body and his plane were never recovered, and he is listed as Missing in Action. As in other cases, Foley noted a mother's name and address so he could later write a letter of condolence. See entry for May 5, 1943. In one of his interviews with Stephen O'Brien, he recalled that he'd said a Mass for Grove—who was not a Catholic—on the deck where the planes were garaged, the pilot represented by an empty chair. See photo page 237.

Destroyer races over behind us, but search is useless. This boy failed to qualify. Later learn that these boys must take off from catapult once, then land and take off under their own power four times more for final qualification. Trials must go on. Next man lines up, next, next, etc., without mishap, thank God. Only casualty for the rest of the afternoon is a plane handler who ran into a cable barrier and cut his face, much the same as running into a clothesline in the dark.

SUNDAY, MAY 13, 1945

Mother's Day. Masses as usual. Ship still saddened by death of Groves. Memorial Mass at 0900.

MONDAY, MAY 14, 1945

Into San Diego.

May runs out with trial runs and qualifications for the flyers with happily no more accidents. At the end of May we went into the Naval Repair Base at San Diego for a yard overhaul of 14 days, during which some minor changes were made to some of the ship's installations.

Official business is heavy when men find out that leave will not be granted. They concoct many reasons for excuses to go home. However, policy is settled by Executive Officer that only leaves granted will be for emergency.

One boy came for straight information on marriage to a Catholic girl in New York. He was already divorced after a valid marriage. She failed to let him know that she could not marry him at the time of their trip before a Justice of the Peace. He cried quietly when I told him that he would have to give her up.

Another man wanted to get a special liberty in order that he might obtain some meat for his baby in Mexico. That was the latest wrinkle for me. I wound

up down in the butcher shop, carrying out two pounds of hamburger and a pound of liver.

Lost my garrison cap with insignia over the side when propeller wash seized it and whipped it off my head. I'm learning.

SUNDAY, JUNE 17, 1945

0600—Mass aboard ship.

0730—Mass at Lowery Annex at Naval Air Station, San Diego.

1900—Mass aboard ship.

Today was the day. We got underway for Pearl Harbor at 1000. I dropped into the Pilot's Ready Room on the way up to the flight deck where our war birds are lashed to the deck. One of the pilots was playing "Oh, What A Beautiful Morning," on the record machine. He turned to me with a smile and said, "Don't you think that is a good song for this morning?" Another pilot answers very quickly, "We ought to put on the one entitled 'I Got A Funny Feeling.'"

Last night I went over to the San Diego Cathedral to go to Confession. Walking down the street was a peculiar sensation, realizing that it would be a long time before we would see a city, an American city, again. You were aware of a conscious effort to impress scenes of the busy rhythm on memory to be stored up for a future day when you tried to fix faces. You were tempted to go up to some people, "This is my last walk down a street like this for ages. I'll be thinking of this for a long time. I'll miss the store windows, the busy throng of shoppers, the lobbies of crowded hotels, the lines of people in the restaurant. In other words, I'm going to be missing you, even though I don't know you."

FRIDAY, JUNE 22, 1945

Talk with Seiss, one of the TBM pilots.²⁹⁸ He was looking down at the marvelously blue waters of the

²⁹⁸ A torpedo bomber manufactured by Grumman, the TBM or TBF Avenger was a torpedo bomber widely used in World War II. It was crewed by a pilot, a turret gunner, and a bombardier, and could carry 2,000 pounds of bombs. President George H.W. Bush was flying an Avenger when he was shot down in the South Pacific in September 1944. Its stout appearance as compared with other airplanes, earned it the nickname "Turkey."

Pacific for the first time. Twenty-four years old, he spoke from three years experience Stateside training for pilot. Would not marry because he did not think it fair to the girl. Loved flying, but it has its heart-stopping moments, e.g., This morning he was up 5000 feet, started down when his engine died on him. Apparently bubble in gas line, but had some anxious moments until she started up again. Worries about other two men, radio gunner and bombardier. Hates idea of responsibility for lives of those two men. "But one good feature, the three of us are single."

Now and then we see a plane on the way from Frisco to Pearl or vice versa. They make the 2300 odd miles in a few hours whereas we take seven days. Our flight operations hold us up.

MONDAY, JUNE 25, 1945

We sight Diamond Head about five o'clock. Flight operations began early with reveille at 0400. Mass was at 0630. Espy in distance Royal Hawaiian Hotel.

We cruise up and down off Diamond Head following our flight operations schedule, then about 11 o'clock we start for the channel off Ford Island, scene of the holocaust on December 7, 1941.

We discover that Ford Island is a small island in a bay just about eight miles from Honolulu. On one side where battleship row used to be is one capsized ship, the Arizona on which Fr. [Aloysius] Schmitt met his death.²⁹⁹ Just off our side is the Utah, training ship mistaken by the Japs for a carrier. No land around bears any scars of the damage wrought by the surprise attack four years ago. Hundreds of ships are anchored here, which will be a jam-packed harbor when troops are deployed from the Pacific.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 27, 1945

To Honolulu, eight mile ride in bus from Pearl Har-

bor. City itself is a bit on the dumpy side. Straggling houses, in the way which Hawaiians and Chinese and Japanese of all shades and castes live. Continue in bus to Royal Hawaiian Hotel which is now a recreation place for the submarine men back after a long cruise of duty. Buff colored walls, awninged windows, lovely foyer, then outside golden sands, long breakers curving in on a curving shore help it to live up to expectations.

Learn that one of our fighter pilots was seriously injured last night while practicing night land carrier landings. Lt. William R. Winn from Georgia.

THURSDAY, JUNE 28, 1945

Night carrier landings at midnight, eerie setting. Landing Signal Officers are dressed in luminous outfits that reflect back in orange, green and black colors. Paddles in hands with which they wave on or off the pilots, also luminous. Incoming planes look like giant bugs with purple flames leaping in angry shortings from exhausts on both sides of the engines, much like the two eyes on a giant bug.

Then wing lights of green, red, and tail of blue light up the plane for all to see. Long, slender pencils of light from little fountain pens along the deck help the pilots to make the hazardous landings. Fortunately we have no accidents as they fly on and off all night until dawn. Sleep, naturally, was intermittent.

We learn that Lt. Winn died yesterday. Executive Officer desires memorial services after we complete night flying exercises.

SUNDAY, JULY 1, 1945

Plane brings mail out from land; everybody rejoices, but some sad news. One man from hills of Kentucky visits me to tell of grandmother's death. Can he get to see her? Impossible. Tells me how he was her favorite grandson. Grandfather used to drink heav-

²⁹⁹ Schmitt, a diocesan priest from Dubuque, Iowa, is believed to have drowned after the ship foundered while he was helping other trapped men to escape through a lower deck porthole. He had a short time earlier declined an offer to climb through the porthole to safety. Thirty-two, he was the first American chaplain to be killed as a result of hostile fire since WW I. His remains were identified through DNA testing in 2016 and returned to his family.

ily until one day when he was seen to take a jug of whiskey, leave the house to go up to the brow of the hill, tie the jug to a bent branch of a tree, pull back and send it crashing down the hillside. Never touched a drop after that. Grandmother always gave this boy hot corncakes and buttermilk when he came into her house. Boy cried as he said how he would miss her. At the end of the visit we said a prayer for his grandmother.

MONDAY, JULY 2, 1945

Back again at Pearl Harbor late this afternoon, too late for shore leave. We moor again to the same dock and note that the Utah is aft of us, one of the ships the Japs sank at the time of their attack on December 7, 1941.

THURSDAY, JULY 5, 1945

Joe Cummiskey and I tour the town, visit the 5 & 10, Kresges, big banana split. Counter girls as alert as at home, only difference color of skin, brown, yellow, shape of eyes, straight, almond, etc. We also visit a Buddhist Temple; big golden casket-shaped affair before the altar on which an open tabernacle housed statue of Buddha. Incense was burning perpetually before the altar in a big urn, thin wisp of it rising to the ceiling.

TUESDAY, JULY 10, 1945

Gunnery practice for gun mounts with drone up in the sky, a radio-controlled small plane that successfully eludes all efforts of our gunners to shoot down in the morning. It simulates all attacks, approaches on the ship, diving in on us out of the sun, making port and starboard runs, as well as coming in from forward and aft. It is controlled in its operations by radar on an LCI, Landing Craft Infantry, that cruises directly behind us. In the afternoon two of the drones are shot down, but are recovered by the LCI.

From Pearl Harbor, the Vella Gulf was dispatched 3,800 miles west, to an area from which its planes would be dispatched to attack Japanese position in the Marina Islands, 1,500 miles southeast of the Japanese mainland.

At the conclusion of the voyage, Foley, the inveterate observer, made these undated notes, which he called "Carrier Sidelights."

The Landing Signal Officer, LSO, is the man who flies the planes aboard. His is an important post and dangerous, too, as the emergency net beneath his platform witnesses. In each hand he holds a grid-ded wire paddle, somewhat larger than a ping-pong paddle, strung with brightly colored strips of cloth, his signal flag.

The ritual of landing aboard a carrier is a fascinating one. At its best, it is a virtuoso performance of perfect coordination, quick-thinking and split-second timing. An Army aviator who watched his first carrier landing said, "I see it but I don't believe it. How can a plane land in that space without spinning in?"

Something out of Walt Disney. Picturesque lot, plane-handling sailors. Deck, battle-gray, many-hued jerseys and helmets: 6 yellow for plane directors; 5 green for arresting-gear crew; 1 red for armament and fueling; 3 blue for plane pushers; 4 brown for plane captains; 2 white for hospital corpsmen; 2 white for firefighters and 2 men in asbestos suits.

At night, luminous suit worn by LSO can't be missed by pilot. He swings paddles in hands at night, too, while the flight deck men wave illuminated wands, long slender pencils of orange and red.

Blue flame, blue and incredibly clean spurts from exhausts as planes make night landings.

"Stand clear of propellers." "Start engines."

Aboard a carrier you have what other ships lack, the intimate contact with the offensive blow, the conversations with the pilots and air crew before and after the strike. You hear the thunderous, climactic roar of the engines in the gray dawn; you see them quivering with tremendous power as they strain to get airborne.

Then, too, you experience the constant heavy apprehension over the fate of each pilot and you participate in the daily routine of flight preparations.

Anti-aircraft practice—terrible, deliberate rhythm of the 5” guns, resonant boom of the 40 mm’s, and the staccato extraordinary precision.

MONDAY, JULY 23, 1945

2000 – First briefing on the mission tomorrow. Flyers will make strike on Jap-held island of Pagan, one of the Marianas north of Saipan and Tinian.

Ready Room is crowded with extras, like myself, four newspaper correspondents, two of the flight deck officers, etc. Flyers are reading booklets, “Meet the Marianas,” just in case they are shot down. Others are reading maps, some sharpening their pencils for note taking. One says, “I hope I get me a good target.”

Lt. Col. Koln opens by saying, “We can’t begin the show yet for we haven’t the photographs, but should have them from the lab in a few minutes. From what I have seen of the prints, we ought to be able to cook up something for tomorrow.”

Mr. Royce, Combat Intelligence Officer, takes over for a few minutes with remarks on a slide map that he shows of the island to be hit, Pagan, pointing out some features of the terrain. When he steps down, men relax in leather-upholstered chairs, lighting up their cigarettes for a while. Then all are galvanized into attention by Lt. Koln.

“We’ve got the pictures, boys. Here they are.” Lights are dimmed again and photos are flashed on the screen. He talks quietly, like a college prof., as he points out each target for the six strikes. “Strike Able has a juicy white building here on the tip of this jetty. First four fighters will go in strafing bombs. When you do that there shouldn’t be much left. Strike Baker, two big white houses sitting up on top of this cliff. No scruples about hitting them, for natives don’t live in houses like that.” Remarks that he

will be sitting up there with them. “I’ll drop smoke on two of the targets to mark them, so you fellows can do your stuff. By the way, on these two positions here, make one pass, then go rendezvous for altitude and advantage, then make a second pass, if you haven’t met with much fire on the first pass. If you have, forget the second pass, pick out some other target for what you have left.”

Questions are answered about strafing shipping; answer negative, may be our B-29 men being helped by natives. All ships will be our own.

Somber reminder that trip is not a pleasure venture by Lt. picking up mike, instructing men, “Remember, fellows, leave your wallets behind and all identification; you won’t need any of that.”

TUESDAY, JULY 24, 1945

Pilots return from strike agog with excitement as intelligence officers question them for information that will be of assistance to men making the later six strikes. Report meager fire, sight no Japs, all of them being under cover. Pictures taken will make later strikes immeasurably easier.

0430—Reveille. Ship was up early to get in pre-dawn launching of first strike. Planes are all armed and ready to go with bombs and rockets, for armament men have been up since 0300, earliest on ship to rise.

Strikes launched and landed with rhythmical regularity, each one. Report from one of the early ones states over the radio that she, TBM, has picked up AA fire in one of her wings.

At the end of the day happily all planes and men return with no casualties except TBM mentioned above and one bullet through one of the window shields of a fighter.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 25, 1945

Another strike scheduled this morning, but only 2 knot wind across the deck prevents planes from taking off. Sea is glassy calm with not a ripple on its

face as far as the eye can see. Only planes launched during the day are the ASP, anti-submarine patrols, early morning and afternoon.

THURSDAY, JULY 26, 1945

Another strike; this time on Rota which is situated between Saipan and Guam. Both strikes are launched before seven o'clock, which means that we had to be up again at 0430, an early hour! Again happily no casualties except to the elevators of the planes that went down too close and caught some flak from its own bomb blast or the bomb blast of the plane ahead of it.

We are operating off these islands of Tinian and Saipan, the homes of the B-29's, the monsters of the sky lanes.³⁰⁰ We see them as they are returning in the early morning from their night attacks on Japan's home cities and we see them starting out at night as tonight.

For over one hour they are flying over us on their way north as the dusk descends on the ocean. When they began their flight over us the sun was just sinking in the Pacific Ocean. When it is dark, they are still winging their way north to write their blazing message across the face of Japan for the rulers of that unfortunate country to read. It still holds that there are none so blind as those who won't read.

We stand topside on the flight deck and watch the endless procession across the night sky with their lights showing clearly, to be extinguished later on, somewhere during their fourteen hour trip when they are over enemy territory.

Though they number hundreds, they look lonesome up in the sky with their precious cargo of eleven men for whom families, wives, children, mothers,

sweethearts are praying back home. What does the night's venture hold in store for them? Which will be among those whose trip will be characterized by that simple, short but tragic word, "only" one plane, two planes were lost. I bless them as they leave us, swallowed up by the night sky, their lights growing dimmer and dimmer in the distance until they are lost to view. May God be with them, every one. We shall have our night's sleep and yet they will be just returning to Saipan and Tinian, their work completed for another two days when they must fly again. I think back on the day I saw two of them flying out of San Francisco over the Bay on the first leg of their long hop to engage the enemy in combat; now they are in it with capital letters.

FRIDAY, JULY 27, 1945

Today we entered port that is open water behind the anti-sub nets off Tanapoag, Saipan. It is about 150 miles north of Guam, with a temperature much cooler and, for that reason, more comfortable than Guam. Harbor has no men of the fleet. Ships are all at sea or another anchorage, preparing for the big strike against Japan.

SATURDAY, JULY 28 TO WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 1, 1945

We have qualification runs for shore-based pilots who land and take off immediately. Weather closes in frequently with rain and fog so days are not as profitable as expected.

Mass, as every morning, starts the day in the hangar deck. Being Saturday, I visit the USS St. Olaf nearby to arrange for Mass aboard for the Catholic men and nurses since she is a US Army Hospital Ship. Find aboard Fr. Halloran, S.J., Missouri Province, who informs me that Frs. Jimmy McLaughlin and Jimmy Dolan, fellow New Englanders, are ashore on

³⁰⁰ Introduced into the war in June 1944, and used almost exclusively in the Pacific Theater, the Boeing B-29 Superfortress was a high-altitude bomber with a range of 5,600 miles. First deployed from China in bombing raids on Japanese targets, the aircraft were shifted to the Marianas in November 1944. From there they were capable of reaching all major Japanese cities. The firebombing of Tokyo on March 9-10 1945, which engaged 279 B-29s from the Marianas, is considered the most devastating air raid of the war. An estimated 100,000 Japanese were killed, more than died at Hiroshima. As the war neared its close, 65 B-29s were specially fitted so they could carry atomic bombs.

Saipan.³⁰¹ Arrange for Protestant minister to come aboard for my Protestant men tomorrow morning. I find that Lt. Greenwood, an old shipmate from the George Clymer, is a member of the ship's company. USS Woodford is the name of his ship.

Ashore early to Saipan in the afternoon to 121st CB's where I wake Jimmy McLaughlin out of a sound sleep to say hello when we have not met for four years. He looks well, was on Tinian, moved here a few weeks ago with his outfit. Has a lovely chapel that his men built for him out of spare time and scrap lumber.

MONDAY, AUGUST 6, 1945

Early rising as usual for General Quarters, followed by Mass. Marine Stan Glowacki, 19, wishes to become a lay brother when the war is over. Lt. Bill Massey is puzzled by the "meaningless universe" in which we live. Wants some assurance that truths of religion were not manufactured by an overheated imagination.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 9, 1945

ON THIS NIGHT THE ATOMIC BOMB, MAN'S LATEST INSTRUMENT OF DESTRUCTION, WAS DROPPED ON HIROSHIMA, POPULATION 375,000, AND DESTROYED MOST OF THE CITY AND 40% OF THE PEOPLE. MAN'S INHUMANITY TO MAN.³⁰²

One of the fighter pilots aboard remarked that he should hate to have the burden on his conscience that he personally was responsible for sending that number, 225,000, of people into eternity, "even if I were carrying out orders."³⁰³ Lt. Hall remarks at breakfast that Jap plane approached within 30 miles of our anchorage last night. Sixteen fighters were vectored immediately to him and he crashed in flames.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 10, 1945

2140 (9:40 P.M.)—General Quarters. We all bounce to General Quarters, hear a lot of firing; ships have opened up all around us. Learn later that it was an impromptu celebration at news, premature, that war was over; that six men were killed and thirty wounded by our own anti-aircraft fire. Lack of discipline responsible for their deaths as well as unauthorized celebrations.

0000—Midnight. Footnote written to rumor about end of war when we have a raid approaching at this hour; no damage done to us, just a lot of night fireworks and thunder.

Sailor's sister, Army Nurse, comes aboard for a short visit. Their mother will be glad to hear the good news. Another man's brother also makes contact aboard.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 11, 1945

Underway again for Guam with a load of 60 planes to be serviced at Guam by A. and R. shops there, most of them fighter ships, a lot of them with Jap flags painted on their sides.³⁰⁴

SUNDAY, AUGUST 12, 1945

Two Masses today and Rosary and Benediction in the afternoon. We learn that a Jap submarine launched a human [manned] torpedo at an LSD [Dock Landing Ship] four hours astern of us passing through the same area. Explosion of torpedo occurred about 1830 (6:30).

MONDAY, AUGUST 13, 1945

Pilots going up on Combat Air Patrol had instructions not to molest a Jap hospital ship on the way to Wake Island. Two of them on return reported that they had sighted her. Later we learn that she was

³⁰¹ James D. McLaughlin (1918–1977) was a priest of the New England Jesuit Province, as was James J. Dolan (1903–1952) who later served in a Jesuit mission in Jamaica that was administered by New England.

³⁰² The atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima on August 6.

³⁰³ An estimated 80,000 people were killed as an immediate consequence of the bomb.

³⁰⁴ American personnel would stencil a rising sun symbol on boats or planes to indicate "kills,"

intercepted by one of our destroyers, claimed immunity from attack under the Geneva Convention. On her way to evacuate sick Japanese personnel from Wake [Island]. Allowed to proceed with stipulation that she report back for inspection on her return voyage. Did so; inspection party found in her sick bays nearly 200 of the Island's garrison, "so decrepit from malnutrition and disease that the destroyer's doctor doubted whether half of them would live to reach Tokyo, even under the best of care." Just a sample of what happened to the by-passed Japanese.

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 15, 1945 Feast of Our Lady's Assumption.

We are steaming on the way to Guam from Okinawa about 10 o'clock with Guam lying low on the horizon when word is passed down the Public Address System to stand by for a special announcement. Perhaps this is the one we have been waiting for so long. Three times before we have bounced to the speakers, hoping rumors of peace would be settled once and for all by the word of peace. The day itself has been an unusual one at sea. General Quarters about 5 A.M., followed by Mass.

THAT ANNOUNCEMENT. IT WAS THE ALNAV FROM SECRETARY FORRESTAL THAT WE HAD ALL BEEN WAITING TO HEAR. AN AUTHORITATIVE STATEMENT THAT THE WAR WAS OVER. A ROAR OF JOY WENT SKYWARD FROM ALL OVER THE SHIP, AND A PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING THAT GOD HAD AT LAST HARKENED TO THE PRAYERS THAT WERE STORMING HEAVEN FOR THE END OF THE HORRIBLE CONFLICT.

1015—I approached the Executive Officer for permission to say a prayer of thanksgiving over the PA system for the day of days arrival. At the time we were almost at the entrance of Guam harbor waiting for the pilot to come aboard. He said that I couldn't have it then. Then I asked him what would be a good time. He referred me to the Captain standing nearby on the bridge. "Captain, I'd like permission to say a prayer over the PA system, etc." "Fine; now would be a good time."

Bugler sounds attention; all hands uncover.

This is the Chaplain, Fr. Foley speaking. You have just heard the official pronouncement in the form of an ALNAV from the Secretary of the Navy that the war is over. It is only appropriate that the arrival of this moment which has been the object of so many prayers should be commemorated by an act of thanksgiving to Almighty God for the blessing of victory. So we stop for a minute in our shipboard duties to pray.

O Almighty and Everlasting God, Father of Mercies, Whose treasures of goodness are infinite, we raise our minds and hearts to Thee in thanksgiving that this day the nations of the world are no longer locked in deadly strife and that Thou has crowned our arms with victory. Grant, we beseech Thee, that in our moment of victory, we may not forget to walk in the way of Thy Commandments and so merit Thy blessing upon ourselves and our great country in the days of peace that are ahead. We ask Thee, in Thy mercy, to be mindful of our comrades in arms, who made this victory possible, the Marines and soldiers who reddened the beaches from Casablanca to Iwo Jima, and the sailors and pilots who brought their ships and planes to a flaming end. To them, O Lord, and to all who place their trust in Thee, grant a place of refreshment, light and peace, through Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Later in the afternoon I tried to phone Ed on the beach, but this was his day off so failed to get in touch with him. Better luck tomorrow.

1600 (4:00 P.M.)—Another Mass in honor of Our Lady in thanksgiving for the end of the war and for the repose of the souls of those who had made the victory possible.

This evening in the harbor the men are shooting off rockets celebrating in a mild way compared to the tragic premature celebration at Okinawa last Friday.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 16, 1945

Mass as usual started the day.

Set out in the afternoon to see Ed. Thumbed my way along the four lane highway Sea Bees and Army Engineers built until I reached Ed's hospital where he was not at home. Off on a beach party with some of his rehabilitation cases. Shows up about four o'clock, then we return to the ship where he sits down to a good meal of roast beef and all the fixings. He tells me of his hectic night last night and why his fellow officers have started to call him "Salty." Yesterday, his day off, he and a dentist went out in a sailboat and were marooned about five miles off shore. They were steadily drifting out to sea when they were spotted by another officer on the beach who was supposed to pick them up in a jeep. He

saw them in the distance, immediately got in touch with air-sea rescue and before long a plane was circling over the drifting sailors. Then a Dumbo dropped flares all around them when it got dark. As they drifted helplessly, they suddenly saw this big hull bearing down on them out of the smoke caused by the flares. Sailors lined her with drawn guns and rifles primed to fire. When they shouted not to fire and identified themselves, the tension was broken. At 1 A.M. the two unwilling sailors finally got back home. Later on the same evening, a Jap was picked up in the same area, apparently a radio man, who learned of the surrender over the radio and decided to turn himself in.

Ed won't forget August 15th for two reasons, the end of the war and his saga of the sea.

Destination Tokyo

MONDAY, AUGUST 20, 1945

We are underway at 1400 for some unknown destination. Speculation rife on what it will be.

TUESDAY, AUGUST 21, 1945

This afternoon we catch up with a convoy of seven fat-bellied tankers and one PA [attack transport], whose escort duties we take over from the USS Makin Island.

Destination still unknown. Morning meeting with speech by Executive Officer and Captain on opportunities for staying in the regular Navy. When show of hands was called for from 45 officer reservists on how many intended to stay in, not one raised his hand.

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 22, 1945

We are steaming on a course dead north off Iwo Jima where so many Marines paid the last full measure of devotion. Weather has happily taken a change for colder with the face of the ocean green again, exactly like the Atlantic. Waves are riding high with tremendous crests and deep troughs. Day is one of the roughest we have had but it is a normal Atlantic day. Some of the men are sick, but most are able to act like sailors, even though we are rolling and pitching a bit.

Press release is full of information about conditions of surrender dictated by MacArthur. We only know that we shall be very close to the Island of Honshu.³⁰⁵ In case the Japs perpetrate a piece of treachery, we shall be on hand for action. The landing will be a full scale

invasion, with skies black with land-based and carrier planes, numberless combat transports, destroyers, battlewagons, cruisers, destroyer escorts, etc.

A typhoon is brewing that grounds all our planes which have been flying anti-submarine patrol. Sea grows nasty, sullen clouds blot out the sun, waves increase to a mountainous size as we continue to plow north.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 24, 1945

We are slowly steaming along behind the tail of one typhoon [Typhoon Ruth] and just ahead of the nose of another [Typhoon Susan]. Newscast reports that day of surrender has been postponed due to the fact that Tokyo airfield has been turned into a sea of mud by the typhoon which is hitting it.

Our planes are lashed down with normal lines, plus four steel cables where there would normally be one. Such is the insurance against the effects of the typhoon. Wind is racing across the deck at a high speed and all hands are told to keep off flight deck forward of the barriers and away from the palisades which are perpendicular steel staves inserted in the security tracks on the deck to break the force of the wind as it howls into the planes lashed down topside.

Looking out on the horizon, we discover that we have grown considerably since yesterday. Instead of eight ships, we now number 24, being increased by five other carriers, destroyers and destroyer escorts. Cruiser, Detroit, is command ship with an admiral aboard.

³⁰⁵ Japan's main, and most populous, island. The major industrial cities of Tokyo, Yokohama, Osaka, and Nagoya were on the island, as was Hiroshima.

SATURDAY AUGUST 25, 1945

0400—Reveille! Followed by General Quarters as usual. Even though we put the clocks back last night we lose out this morning. We are sleepy.

0500—Sunrise.

I poke into the navigator's chartroom to find out that we are 300 miles from Tokyo and headed straight for it. However, we shall probably reverse direction, for we are still trying to keep away from the typhoons lashing the island off our port side, Japan itself. If we were here one month ago, we would be sweating blood, with Jap planes diving in on us and the submarines trying to file us in Davy Jones' locker. We learn today that the battlewagon hit the night before we left Okinawa two weeks ago was the *Pennsylvania*, with twenty men being killed by the torpedo that holed her. Fr. Burke, ex-Bethesda chaplain with me, aboard her. Hope he is all right.³⁰⁶

Discover that we now total 52 ships with new carriers and cruisers joining us. We are a formidable fleet now, ready for anything if the Japs should suddenly change their minds. We are now running at will up and down outside Tokyo just waiting for the day of surrender. I remove my dog tags.³⁰⁷ Only worry now is floating mines which destroyers that are our picket line occasionally explode with their 5" shells. The doughty DD's [destroyers], they always have the dirty work and receive not too much credit.

SUNDAY, AUGUST 26, 1945

0355—Reveille. 0500—Mass. 0900—Mass. 1000—General Service.

1600—Rosary and Benediction.

Day dawns bright and clear like an early September day back home. Late leavers among the rain clouds are hurrying to get away across the sky, as though they might be picked up for stragglers by the sun. Beautiful sight of 52 ships, with seven carriers among them, the biggest being the *Intrepid* which is fueled by one of the tankers. Small DD's also have their tanks filled again by other tankers of which there now ten with us, the most important unit of the fleet. All these have come from Eniwetok where they were standing by for just an occasion like this.

Temperature is mild, although when the ship is but-toned up for the night, she heats up again as if she were still down south.

One of the Marines has this remark to make to one of the sailors this noon in the chow line, "Say, you must clean your teeth with gunpowder, you shoot your mouth off so much."

At table tonight one of the flyers tells me that they start to fly again tomorrow morning, with the menace of the typhoon having disappeared. They have instructions not to molest a Jap hospital ship which is on its way to Marcus Island to pick up the remnants of the garrison there.³⁰⁸

³⁰⁶ John Burke, CSC (1903-1957), escaped without injury and was later celebrated for writing personalized letters to survivors of each of the men who died on the *Pennsylvania*. Following the war, he became a senior administrator at the University of Notre Dame.

³⁰⁷ A flat declarative sentence, but a significant moment for Foley, as for all servicemen and women. Dog tags were worn by all military personnel for identification purposes. The Navy tags were oval and debossed with first and last name, middle initial, identification number, blood type, month and year of entering the service, and religion: P or C or H (Hebrew). Two identical tags were worn on a necklace: one to be removed so a death could be reported, and the other left behind so the body could be identified when it was retrieved.

³⁰⁸ Marcus Island was a small, arrowhead-shaped Japanese atoll that American forces bombed through 1943 and 1944 but never invaded, moving past it to engage targets closer to the Japanese mainland. The island's decimated Japanese force surrendered to the U.S. Navy on August 3, 1945. The bombing of the island is a focus of one of the most remarkable propaganda documentaries produced by the War Department. More than an hour long, *The Fighting Lady*, released in 1944, treats a year on the aircraft carrier *Yorktown*. The filming, by gun-mounted cameras, of an aerial bombing attack on Marcus Island occupies 11 minutes of the film, beginning at 13:50. It may be viewed on C-Span at <https://www.c-span.org/video/?327301-1/reel-america-the-fighting-lady-1944>. For more on the state of "garrison remnants" on by-passed Pacific island," see Foley's entry for August 13, 1945 in regard to soldiers removed from Wake Island by a Japanese hospital ship.

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 2, 1945

Copy of letter to my mother:

This great day [V-J Day] is now part of history, but it is one that all of us will not forget for a long time. I don't know whether or not you heard the description of the signing of the peace treaty over the radio, but we had a first hand report of it, there about 250 miles off Yokohama. The time was a reasonable one for us, Sunday morning at ten-thirty, but for you folks it was, unless I am mistaken, about eleven o'clock Saturday night. You see, we are ahead of you way out here where we are closer to home by way of India, Suez Canal and the Atlantic than the way we came out here.

I heard the speeches of President Truman, General MacArthur and Admiral Nimitz in our wardroom which is directly under our flight deck, aft part of the ship. A little door in the bulkhead, through that, and you could see the planes landing while the speeches were being broadcast. In that particular corner of the wardroom, about ten of us officers were clustered around the radio eager for every word that was being said.

What I liked particularly about Truman's speech was his gratitude to Almighty God for crowning our arms with victory. Judging from his utterances so far, he is a religious man, and is not afraid to proclaim his religion.

Again, what he has to say seems to have the ring of sincerity. His next reference to the dead and their families struck a responsive chord in the hearts of all of us. I had remarked to a Marine officer that I would like to see the First Division of Marines march

down Tokyo's main stem and then have them shipped back to the States to New York and parade down Fifth Avenue. They were the boys who fought first on Guadalcanal, all the way through the bitter and bloody Pacific campaigns right up to the door of Tokyo itself.

The Marine officer remarked that the boys who should do the marching wouldn't be there. His own brother was one of those who fell in the taking of Peleliu, north of New Britain. Truman didn't omit a single group in his expression of thanksgiving. He did a good job.

MacArthur was very good also. He didn't forget the men who forged the victory for him as he said, "I speak for the men who lie on the beaches, along the jungle trails, and for the sailors who are buried in the depths of the sea." It wasn't surprising to see one of the officers who was a survivor of the sinking in the Coral Sea unashamedly wipe away a tear. He had seen many of his shipmates killed aboard ship and drowned in the water.³⁰⁹

Nimitz who followed MacArthur struck the same notes as the rest of the speakers. He showed how universal the sacrifice was when he ran off the list of names of the men who are buried in the cemetery near his headquarters on Guam. Every nationality was represented. On my way to see Ed I passed a number of times the cemetery he mentioned. The row upon row of white crosses stand out most prominently against the blazing tropical green of the surrounding acres. Some day perhaps the government will make it possible for the mothers of those boys to come and see where they are buried, just off the beach that they died to win.

³⁰⁹ Four American ships were lost on May 4-8, 1942 in the Battle of the Coral Sea. Foley is likely referring to most prominent of them, the carrier *Lexington*.

Yesterday the more fortunate boys who had lived through it all started the sweetest trip they have made in their naval career, the long trip home. Men who had the required forty-four points left us yesterday as we marked time off Yokohama, as we have been doing for the last week. They won't forget their departure nor shall we.³¹⁰

A big tanker came alongside of us, as we both steamed at about eight knots. A breeches buoy was made fast and then the forty-four men who left us were swung across the open water, about twenty-five yards of it, two at a time. Just as the first men were hoisted out over the side, our bugler played, "California here I come!" Their sea bags followed them over.

They all clustered together on the well deck of the tanker, waving to us left behind and making remarks about what they would do to remember us to God's country. Then we pulled away and we went back to our position in the task force while the tanker steamed off to rendezvous with a carrier to which she would transfer the men again and then "HOME!" These were the men who deserved to go first, for they had gone in right at the beginning of the war, most of them were married or if not, had dependents. When told that they were to leave us, they said that they pinched themselves to help realize the good news was true. I lost some fine members of my Catholic congregation; a couple of boys were daily communicants, one in particular as fine a man as I have met in the service. His name is Bill Malloy; he is married to a lovely Irish girl and steps into a job with the New York Fire Department. Funny how men turn out. It

just occurred to me that we have another Irishman aboard, not first generation, as Malloy, but straight from Cork, who would do anything for me personally but never goes to Mass. 'I'm an atheist, Father,' he tells me. He is about the same age as Malloy, twenty-eight, comes from an excellent Catholic family in Brooklyn but, 'I just can't see it, Father.' What are you going to do with a man like that? A hard blow of misfortune may bring him to his senses sometime. Yet even though he won't go to church, he would knock a man down who would say anything against me! Figure that type out.

Even though the war is over, the danger is still as great as ever for our pilots. It is no easier to take off or land on our floating airstrip. That was brought home to us this afternoon about five o'clock. As one of our fighters was curving in for a landing, he lost altitude quickly, his engine died out and he made a water landing. Our hearts were sick with anxiety as the plane spun in. Then about three seconds later a figure was seen to swim away from the sinking plane and everyone breathed easier. You should have seen the destroyer that tails us always during operations for just such an emergency. That sea behind her boiled furiously as she closed in the two hundred yards between her and the pilot. He was pulled aboard by willing hands and there he is, still aboard the tin can as I type this letter at eight o'clock. He celebrated V-J Day in his own special way!

Just this minute a copy of tomorrow's press release, a three page mimeograph stint was handed to me by my yeoman. There I read about the signing of the peace treaty that will take place Sunday!

³¹⁰ The Adjusted Service Score was used to calculate which military personnel would be repatriated first. Devised in anticipation of the European victory, the formula, which was several times revised, awarded points for months in the service, months overseas, combat medals, and children under age 18, among other factors. American soldiers were generally pleased with the system, but, along with their families at home, sometimes angrily protested the slow pace at which repatriation was accomplished.

Before closing, one more item. Tomorrow we intend to shoot one of our Bosun's. He had the bridge watch this afternoon and announced just as I was about to start Rosary and Benediction, "First Division stand by for receiving mail from destroyer on starboard quarter." A roar of joy went up on the ship, for we have had no mail these two weeks we have been at sea. I told the men they could write to the folks about the happy interruption to my remarks about the two intentions for which we were saying the Rosary, in gratitude for the peace and in remembrance of the dead. Then we found later that the mail was a couple of official letters from the Admiral of the task force to our skipper. That Bosun! He should have said "Guard Mail" in his announcement.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 5, 1945

For the first time since the war was declared, our ships are lit up at sea. It is indeed a sight for sore eyes tonight topside. All around us, our sister ships have their running lights showing, red for port, green for starboard. Those that are fortunate enough to have portholes have them wide open, letting out their circles of light to pierce the inky darkness of the ocean off Japan.

Today also the censorship is removed so that we can now tell everything about where we have been and what we have been doing.

SATURDAY AND SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 8 AND 9, 1945

Copy of another letter to my mother:

At his very moment of writing, your oldest boy is practically sitting in the shadow of Fujiyama, world-famous mountain that greets all visitors to the capital of Japan.

This morning about five o'clock through the mist of a watery sunrise we caught our first glimpse of "enemy" territory on the home-

land when our task force entered Sagami Bay outside of Yokohama. An island appearing high on our port side and there we saw our first Japanese trees growing on the soil of a country that we were fighting just one short month ago. Naturally everybody was anxious to drink in every single object on the shore but not until the sun rose higher in the sky was that wish fulfilled.

About eight o'clock we dropped anchor after maneuvering slowly up the bay and getting closer and closer to the mainland. The sights that met our eyes might have been any part of our northern coastline on the Atlantic Coast back home. There was a beach that stretched for miles, slate-colored, with a big sea wall to keep back the fury of the ocean when a typhoon starts whipping it up. Back from the beach were substantial houses with solid tile roofs, none of them pagoda type except two or three. Then above all things, what should we see but a trolley car making its way along the rim of the shoreline, a trolley car with brown sides, yellow-trimmed windows and silver roof. Shades of Revere Beach!

However, this was no amusement center or a refuge for the oi polloi on a hot Sunday afternoon. Only occasional groups of houses, clan-like in their huddling together, broke the density of the trees that climbed up the mountains directly behind the beaches.

As the day grew older and we could identify more and more of the shore contours, we echoed over and over what one officer said when we caught sight of land early this morning, "Thank God we didn't have to fight our way in here. Acquisition of real estate is always a costly proposition on beaches, especially when there is determined opposition to your intentions." On the face of one cliff, we could make out two gun positions and a number of narrow slits that must have had some

pieces of military effectiveness behind them. But not a sound of any kind came from those beaches, happily, very unlike our landing in North Africa when we were heavily shelled by shore batteries after dropping anchor off Port Lyautey.

It was a fascinating game picking out objects of interest all around us. White flags, of course, flew in abundance over gun positions we find out later. One particularly, on top of a high hill caught the eye as it flew straight out in the strong breeze that gave us a temperature for the day of about 68 or 70.

Flags could also be seen flying from some of the houses along the beaches. We don't know what the inhabitants thought of our task force of fifteen ships when they woke up this Sunday morning to see the American flag streaming from each one of Uncle Sam's men-of-war. Naturally, during the day, we didn't have a chance to interview them, either, although we could see them walking along the beach and looking us over. We would have given not a penny, but a dollar for their thoughts. You know that next Friday is the day of their national humiliation. On that day, they will hear the tread of a conquering army as it marches down their main street in Tokyo. Imagine how we would have felt had we been defeated and the Japs staged a victory parade down Tremont Street, Fifth Avenue, or Pennsylvania Avenue. That might give us some idea, if only faintly, of how these people will feel, come Friday.

Now I have said nothing about the planes that have been filling the sky over us, all transports, C-54's, B-17's, B-24's, and even B-29's, all engaged in ferry work, taking soldiers in and departing with full loads of released war prisoners. They are a magnificent picture as they fly across the face of the blue sky, their sleek silver sides glinting in the sharp sunlight and, best of all, with no

opposition from the anti-aircraft batteries. There is an airport just over the brow of the hills behind the beach nearest to us, and judging from the planes that are constantly in its traffic circle, that place is as busy, no, busier, than LaGuardia airfield in New York.

Well, there are some hodge-podge impressions of this eventful day way out here where history of the best kind, peace history, is being made these days. Tomorrow I shall add a few more lines, for I haven't said a word about something you must have gathered already that the news censorship has been released on our end now.

One more word about this mountain, Fujiyama. It was a breath-taking sight to see it flinging its snow-crowned head, twelve thousand feet high, up into the blue sky. The contrast of colors was beautiful. The green of the waters as the eye travelled toward it, the deeper green of the trees that clothed it until the snow began, three-quarters of the way up, and then the clear sharp blue of the heavens. These colors didn't have the blazing intensity of the tropics at all. Perhaps that's why this area reminds us so much of home. I just went up to the flight deck to get a breath of fresh air before turning in at this hour of ten o'clock. The only lights visible are those on our ships, for we are all lit up like Christmas trees. But that's another story that must wait for tomorrow.

Monday, 3:30 P.M. In again after just coming down this lovely afternoon from the flight deck where everybody on the ship who is not actively engaged is rubber-necking topside at what is to be seen in Tokyo Harbor. That's right. We have moved since this morning at eleven o'clock. We pulled up the hook as the sailors phrase it, and made our way up the rest of the Bay until we anchored right here in Tokyo's front pond. As we headed directly into the harbor, both shorelines were flanked

with white flags. Again the land was moderately mountainous, with plenty of industrial activity evident from the huge smoke stacks belching their black messages. By the way, just before we got underway this morning, there were dozens of fishermen out early for the catch in their small rowboats that were sculled from the stern. They didn't cast a single glance at us as they went by. Perhaps their wounded pride wouldn't let them dignify us, even with a look of recognition.

Putting you back in Tokyo Harbor for the sights, all around us is melancholy evidence of the damage done by our Navy planes in their repeated attacks. Imagine how Boston Harbor would look with Castle Island, Deer Island, Governor's Island, and all the rest being bombed and bombed by enemy planes.

These fortified islands here were supposed to guard the approaches to the city, but what could they do against planes moving at the rate of three and four hundred miles an hour?

You can just imagine the might of the American Navy that is stationed here for the edification or the intimidation of the Japs. Every conceivable ship is here, from the little tugs to the giant battlewagons and carriers.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 1945

Into Tokyo Harbor where we join forces with a mighty armada of assembled naval might, every conceivable type of ship. And all around melancholy evidence of the destructive force of naval aviation. Three forts guarding the entrance to the harbor have been reduced to rubble; the biggest has its big concrete blocks pointed at weird angles into the sky and the smallest is leveled at the water's edge. Off to

one side is a Jap destroyer that was driven aground and on the other side a big Jap battlewagon has been badly gutted by a fire, apparently strafed by our bombs. Smaller craft lie sunken in the waters, but fortunately not in such a place that they impede the steady flow of American shipping.

Today is the anniversary of Bl. Charles Spinola and Companions. Mass in his honor today. An Italian from Genoa, he labored twenty years here in Japan and then was executed in 1622 together with 19 other members of religious orders; 12 Jesuits altogether, 2 priests, 7 scholastics, 2 catechists and one lay brother. Thirty laymen and women were also executed in the presence of 30,000 Catholics at Nagasaki.³¹¹

Coincidence that this should be the day that we make formal entrance into the harbor of Tokyo.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 1945

Off in the distance we can make out the smoke stacks of Yokohama; some of the factories have been badly gutted by fire. One big gas tank remains standing, two have only their charred frames left. A forest of smokestacks dots the horizon, making this area another Pittsburgh.

Movie this evening, "Rhapsody in G" by Gershwin.³¹²

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 1945

Copy of another letter:

What a day this has been! For the first time, I set foot on Japanese soil in the city of Yokohama. I thought that instead of writing you individually I might chronicle the experiences of my first "liberty" in Japan in the form of a circular letter. This form will at least save Kay some time and labor, for knowing her from the past, she would sit down at her trusty machine and proceed to multi-copy this effort.

³¹¹ Spinola, a Jesuit who came to Japan in 1602, stayed on after missionaries were banned in 1614. He was captured, imprisoned, and burned at the stake on September 10, 1622.

³¹² Foley meant "Rhapsody in Blue," a Warner Bros. biopic released in June 1945.

To begin at the beginning. About half past eight this morning we shoved off from our carrier in an LCI (Landing Craft Infantry), fifty of us for a day in Yokohama. We had been equipped with yen for spending money in exchange for our good American dollars. Yours truly also carried about thirty packages of cigarettes which he knew he would get rid of somewhere. One person he had in mind, and that person received half of them before noon.

After about an hour's run, very slowly, due to the tremendous amount of shipping anchored and moving in the Bay of Tokyo, all ours with the exception of a few sampans fishing for crabs or something. We nosed our way by two big cylindrical cones about fifty feet in height, one colored red and the other white, that guarded the immediate entrance to the docking area.

The area around the docks was much the same as that in any seaside port, long warehouses, high cranes and railroad spurs. Off to our right, we could make out three Navy hospital ships engaged in their work of mercy of bringing our prisoners back to health. Just before we stepped onto the dock, somebody remarked that reports about the damage done to this second city of Japan were certainly exaggerated. The B-29's were supposed to have written it off the map.

A walk from the dock of about ten minutes brought us to the first signs of the bomb devastation. One huge office building was completely gutted by fire. When the three of us travelling together, a Marine flyer by the name of Jack Massa and an ensign, Chuck Daniel, looked inside the entrance and up through the six stories to the sky, all we could see was twisted steel girders, blackened timbers and scarred walls. "That was one place that caught it," somebody remarked. As we walked along, here and there

would be another building whose walls were leaning at crazy angles while its insides were strewn all over the ground, but still hardly seemed to have been a city "written off" by the Air Force.

In front of that skeleton one of the ship's combat photographers asked me to step up and say hello to a group of Japs who were waiting for a streetcar, the first intimation we had that they were running. The three of us gathered around the Japs. They looked at us and we looked at them and I asked one of them in good English what I meant as a baseball question, "How did the Yanks make out?" One of our Marines who had come said, "That's a beauty of a question you asked them, Father."

That street we were walking on didn't seem particularly damaged until we turned a corner sharply. Then a landscape of utter desolation met our eyes. We were on the edge of the business section of Yokohama. That area of about four square miles was completely destroyed. Acre after acre was leveled to the ground. As if to point out the devastation, here and there by some quirk of fate a building would be left partially standing, a melancholy survivor of the holocaust that consumed its neighbors.

While we were looking over the dismal scene three women, obviously English by their dress, were about to pass by us after saying a cheery "Good morning," when I asked if they knew where the Catholic Church was. They indicated a white church standing on a hill about two miles away, saying that it had been one of the few structures to escape the "terrible day," May 26th, "that you boys came over."

One of the Marines had asked her where the main business street was, with all the stores. She smiled as she said, "You left nothing of

it.” On the “day” she said that all the destruction was done in a period of two hours as hundreds of B-29’s roared in at broad daylight about eight o’clock in the morning. The three women were overjoyed to see us. Two of them had just been released two days ago from a concentration camp. The third who told us about the bombing had not been imprisoned because she had been married to a Japanese. Her house near the church had been spared the destruction that ravaged the city below her.³¹³

When she found out I was a Catholic priest, she insisted on taking me to a Catholic hospital with an Irish superior. However, she was away and the acting Reverend Mother was a French Sister. The hospital also had been untouched by the bombing, but it was as bare as the deck in my cabin. The Japanese Navy had taken it over and when they moved out a short while ago, took every single bit of equipment with them. They left only the walls and the floors. Even the mirrors were removed from the bathrooms. She and another Sister were living in one bare room wondering when they could start the hospital functioning again.

After a visit with her, the three of us mentioned earlier dropped in on the pastor of the church. He was a Frenchman who had been in Japan for twenty-two years. What he had to say about the Japs was enlightening. “You Americans must do two things, drive the military class out of public life and take his divinity away from the Emperor.” He also told us that the Japs despise people of white skin, no matter what the nationality. After a visit with him for half an hour, we dropped in to say hello to Our Lord in the church

which could have been the Sacred Heart Church in Medford Hillside for size, but St. Catherine’s on Spring Hill for beauty with its marble columns.³¹⁴ The statues were Our Lady, the Little Flower, and St. Stanislaus with a Japanese cast to his features. But it was a Catholic church and a Catholic felt at home immediately in it.

Our visit over, we walked down a road, came to a turn and were amazed to see a valley about three miles square that had once been a residential section completely burned out. No, there was no exaggeration about the thoroughness of the work of the B-29’s.

Back to the city we went and walked through the devastated sections. Over everything was the hand of death. Water and gas mains had been broken and the smell of decay hung heavy in the air.

What of the Japs? The few thousand we saw were poverty stricken. Men, women and children were clothed in rags, literally, that had been patched over and over again. They were quite friendly with their smiles and anxious to pick up any scraps of food they could. The life of the city was practically paralyzed, the only semblance of activity being the trolley cars that ran intermittently. But here and there in what used to be downtown Yokohama, a trolley car, now just a gaunt burnt-out skeleton, had been pushed over to the side of the cleared street to allow some form of traffic as well as its own living brothers to move. War had visited these people in its more horrible forms. Now four months after the ‘terrible day’ they were still trying, and not succeeding, to recover from its effects.

³¹³ On May 29, 1945, 454 B-29 Superfortress aircraft engaged in an incendiary bomb attack on Japan’s second largest city. Nearly seven-square miles of the city’s business and industrial areas were destroyed. The raid actually took one hour and nine minutes.

³¹⁴ The Sacred Heart Church was in Medford, Massachusetts, while St. Catherine of Genoa Church was in neighboring Somerville. Both municipalities were ethnic, working-class industrial cities north of Boston, where Foley was raised.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 1945

Near the South Dakota. a big Jap battlewagon, superstructure bridge area charred skeleton. Must have cremated all the Japs topside when she was hit by our flyers. Sign on one of her forward gun turrets, "NO VISITORS!" Navy hopes to take her home as biggest souvenir of the war. Men aboard trying to get her in shape.³¹⁵

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 1945

Letter to mother:

It is now eight o'clock this September evening and a movie is being shown on the hangar deck below by the name of "Tomorrow the World," a propaganda picture featuring anti-Nazism.³¹⁶ Since I have a constitutional dislike for all propaganda pictures of all stripes, I have passed this one up also. If I had any temptation to attend this one, it would be overcome by my desire to write you something of my experiences today.

Today was another one of those red-letter days I have been mentioning of late. It seems all these later days are red-starred. This one was the latest, for today I visited Tokyo itself. As usual, a Landing Craft Support Ship, more familiarly known as an LCS, came alongside us about ten-thirty this morning and we hopped aboard her to begin the hour ride out of the harbor into Yokohama. You are fairly acquainted with that city, or rather with what is left of it, from my last letter. This trip our group decided to waste no time on a city that was dead, so we made for the train station and boarded the rattler for Tokyo. Believe it or not, but this railroad was exactly like the New York, New Haven and Hartford out of New York. It was electrified all the way.

We had to wait for about ten minutes for the train to pull in and then found out that we were accorded a conqueror's privileges. Not only on his gestures did we ignore the ticket taker, but we stepped into a coach marked in English, RESERVED FOR THE U. S. ARMY. The Navy had no objections to availing themselves of Army accommodations since there seemed to be no soldiers around. So we made ourselves comfortable in cars that were exactly like the Boston El coaches, no better and no worse, just in case an El director might read these lines and get a swelled head about his sardine tins.

Still to give the devil himself credit, there is a limit to the capacity load of the El coaches. There was none to these. The one next to us had reached capacity about ten stations before we reached the main station in Tokyo, but still they managed to pack them in. Being in the last car of the ten car train, we had a good chance to see how many people were jammed into the cars ahead. There always seemed to be room for one more.

Also, our coach gave us a good opportunity to see the damage done by our B-29's in their bombing raids. It took us about forty-five minutes to make the run from Yokohama to Tokyo. Both sides of the track were lined with blackened and rusted evidence of the truth of the claim of the Air Force that Tokyo and Yokohama were no longer targets.

Japan is highly industrialized, surprisingly enough. For mile after mile, where there had been factories, there was only chimney after chimney that stood against the skyline, like giant cement pencils that had been frozen in the act of writing some message across

³¹⁵ Likely an instance of scuttlebutt. The editors can find no record of any plan to bring a Japanese war ship to the U.S. after the war.

³¹⁶ "Tomorrow, the World!" was a United Artists production released in December 1944. It tells the story of a teen-age German boy who, after being adopted during the war by an American family, learns to shed his Nazi beliefs.

the sky. Where the factories had not been leveled, their walls stood at crazy angles, ready to topple, it seemed, with the slightest breeze.

Here and there along the road bed, some groups of houses were untouched and the people were bending over their victory gardens, trying not to improve their vegetable yield of the country but to keep from starving.³¹⁷ On the waste lands left by our bombers others had managed to nail together some corrugated tin for a roof over their heads to keep out the rain as they eked out a miserable existence. These hovels continued right into Tokyo itself. A train barker shouting out the names of the stations was the first intimation that we had arrived.

Out we piled about half-past two with myself trying to head for the Jesuit University run by Fr. [Bruno] Bitter, S.J., Sancta Sophia. Outside of the station which had also been gutted by our fire bombs, without damage, however, to the right of way, I separated from my group who headed into the downtown district to purchase some souvenirs.

You can imagine how much I felt at home in a foreign land, knowing nothing of the language and to top it all, in a country where we were regarded as conquerors. It's a funny thing, though I doubt if any American can feel as a conqueror should. The sailors walked down the streets on their best behavior, almost a little self-conscious, it seemed, as they passed one ruined building after another.

Tokyo itself, like Yokohama, was hard hit. Building after building is just a hollow shell. One in particular looked ghastly. It must

have been a beautiful twelve story office building in its day, constructed of white bricks, our red construction size. Fire had consumed the vitals of the building and then licked at the exterior until, as I saw it, it seemed almost like a human being whose face had been horribly burned. An effort had been made to clear away the debris marked by some success, but it will be years before any appreciable impression is made on the devastation that scars the city.

Walking down the street for about ten minutes, I came to a bank and figured that there somebody must be able to talk English. As soon as I stepped into the entrance, a porter very graciously took me in hand to answer my question by escorting me to somebody who could speak English. I file through the main office where about fifty girls were busily engaged in typing, and about twenty tellers, until I met one of the big shots who spoke perfect English. Yes, he knew of the University, but how to direct me there was another question. He finally drew a map, explaining it very carefully, while I mentally figured that I'll never be able to make that and get back to the ship on time. When he finished, I thanked him and gave him a package of cigarettes, about which, incidentally, the Japs are wild, literally.

They wave their money in front of us in the streets offering fabulous prices for even one cigarette, let alone a package. That is how some of the boys manage to pick up their souvenirs without spending money. They simply pay in cigs and then go on their American way, better equipped than before, especially when you remember that we pay only five cents a pack aboard ship for cigarettes.

³¹⁷ Victory Gardens on suburban lawns and in city yards and parks were vigorously promoted in the United States and other Allied countries with the aim of supplying vegetables for home use so that commercially grown produce could be directed to the armed forces. By mid-war in the U.S., an estimated one-third of all available vegetables were the product of Victory Gardens.

I stepped out into the street again, started to walk aimlessly when a Jap who evidently must have been a good mind-reader took in my predicament, so he stepped up and said in perfect English, “May I help you? I speak your language.” I told him my story again. Very graciously he offered to take me to Fr. Bitter, but reluctantly I had to decline when my watch pointed to quarter past three, indicating that the return trip to Yokohama was imperative.

Back to the station then, where I bumped into six of our flyers on the platform. We stood there for about ten minutes when a yell about four tracks over brought sharply to our attention that if we wanted to make the boat back to the ship on time, we should shift gears for our train wouldn’t leave till four and the one on the other track would go in ten minutes. American-like, instead of going down the ramp that led to the other track where some other Marine flyers were who had yelled at us, we hopped down into the train beds, up onto the platforms until we had covered the intervening distance.

When we arrived, we were told that the Japs had a good time laughing at the tallest of us, a flyer about six feet three who negotiated the lift from the train beds to the platform with the ease of a giraffe while the rest of us were obviously laboring. The station, incidentally, was jammed with Japanese leaving their capital city.

Since that train was due to pull out in five minutes, we were late for seats. One of the flyers had a bright idea, the baggage car. There the seven of us rode on the small pieces of baggage, wrapped not in boxes but hemp and rope, all the way to Yokohama. Just to sooth the conscience of the three baggage smashers and their boss, we gave each of them a pack of cigarettes, about a month’s normal wages for them as far as we could

make out. As with all the Japs, these reacted the same way. They were the very essence of courtesy. They bowed from the waist as they mumbled in heavily-accented English, ‘Thank you.’

We enjoyed the relative comfort of the baggage car until we got to Yokohama, we thought. At that station was the Oriental counterpart of the stationmaster who was singing out the name of the station. When we checked with the train guard, he bowed smiling, to our question, “Is this Yokohama?” Then we found ourselves on the street, one station earlier than we should have been. A trolley, with Japs hanging from every strap, came along at the amazing speed of about three miles an hour. However the back end outside was unoccupied and there the terrible conquerors draped themselves. The girl conductor looked around, ventured a furtive smile at us and then turned back soberly to her work of collecting the fares as her countrymen left the trolley.

Meanwhile these wild Americans were enjoying the ride, so much so, that when the car stopped about three times, about six pictures of us were snapped. What a life!

We finally got back to the dock where our old friend the LCS ship picked us up and brought us back to the Vella Gulf. By the way, I forgot to mention that I gave the girl conductor the equivalent of about a month’s wages with a bar of soap and a package of cigarettes just before we hopped off for good.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 1945

Today all liberty parties were cancelled due to the wind that raced across our flight deck at 65 knots, the edge of the latest typhoon. Sea lashed angrily at all the ships and the anchors strained as they tried to hold the big men ‘o war in place. Lasted from 3 A.M. to 4 P.M. when the wind died down and the

face of the water was calm again. This evening there is almost a full moon looking down on the ships again riding peaceably at anchor.

Fortunately only casualties were some small boats that were shaken loose aft of some of the ships. Ours were hoisted in. All hands were cautioned to wear life belts while they worked on the flight deck, so powerful was the force of the wind.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 1945

Press Release: Nine hundred killed in Japan by typhoon.

Ashore at noon today to seaport town of Yokosuka to attend Chaplains' meeting at the Officers' Club. Resolution was passed commending the Naval authorities, American, for closing the public houses of prostitution here in Yokosuka. We thought they closed them.³¹⁸ Walking through the Navy Yard noticed all the big steel presses and cutters were produced in Glasgow by T. E. Smith and Company.

Big work sheds were much the same as those at Navy Yards in Charlestown, Mass. or Bremerton, Washington; completely deserted as were the navy barracks. Here was the training ground for the KK [Kamikaze] boys, the suicide pilots, for the air station is just around the corner. They were terribly effective, sinking 32 ships of the Navy during the Okinawa campaign and hitting 223 others; a lot of good men died.³¹⁹ Before, we could walk down the main stem of this dingy town with its ramshackle houses and red light district with its so obvious signs, in English, "Welcome House" and Jap letters underneath; another "Geisha Girls House." "For Naval, Flyers and 'miyatary.'"

On a big wooden door alongside of the sign was another, "Business For Closed."

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 1945

Once again we left the ship anchored in Tokyo Bay for liberty in the big city of 7,000,000 Japanese, the capital of the Japanese Empire. We steamed on a ship's boat all the way into the docks in Tokyo proper instead of going to Yokohama as before and then taking the electric train into the city. We docked about half-past twelve when I started out to find out where our Jesuit University was. I didn't have the foggiest notion, but I intended to deliver a piece of baggage that contained about a dozen filet mignons, half a dozen cans of corn, the same of beets, a jar of jelly, peanut butter, beef broth mixture, three cartons of cigarettes, etc. The place was somewhere in the vicinity of the Imperial Palace, I was told by Fr. Sam Hill Ray, S.J., of the New Orleans Province.³²⁰

Just as soon as we stepped off the ship a Jap truck driven by an American sailor started to leave the dock. Carrying a black bag and a shoe box loaded with what sailors aptly term loot, I didn't relish tramping all over the city looking for the college, so I hailed him immediately, hopped aboard and asked where he was going. "Nowhere." "Whose truck?" "I don't know." "Where did you get it?" "Right here on the dock." "Ever driven one of these before?" "Nope." "Well, you'll learn. Drive me to the Emperor's Palace."

We headed out there, in the meantime having picked up a full load of officers and men who were going downtown also. As we hit the Ginza [shopping] area, they dropped off with only six staying aboard. We

³¹⁸ As Foley intimates—and as he relates a few paragraphs later—while the American military publicly banned brothels, prostitution openly thrived during the occupation. Some brothels were run under private auspices and others under a quasi-government Japanese agency—the Recreation and Amusement Association—out of concern, the association said, that the safety of Japanese women generally would be put at risk if prostitutes were not available for American occupiers.

³¹⁹ Present-day estimates vary from these figures, but not greatly. Some 5,000 Americans are said to have perished by Kamikaze attacks during the three-month Battle of Okinawa.

³²⁰ Ray would gain notoriety not many years later for publicly standing against the integration of student organizations at the University of New Orleans, where he was director of counseling services. The New Orleans Province formally rejected segregation in 1952.

drove on and on until finally we stopped and asked a Jap man where the Palace was. Pantomime with his hands pointed to the ruined buildings and making believe opening a door didn't help at all. So we passed him along until we met a crowd of kids who gave us general directions which we followed and got more hopelessly lost. Finally I wound up in a police station with an interpreter who turned out to be a Catholic. He couldn't help me either but he did take me down the street to a Protestant church pastored by a Jap minister who was unfortunately away on a "very busy day." Then back to the police station and then to the truck while a million kids clustered around the conquerors lost in the conquered city.

We then headed back in the direction we came from, and I went into a bank, got directions anew from the clerk and following these, we were able to sight the Imperial grounds. The Palace itself we could only see by climbing to the roof of a six story building next across the main highway from the Imperial grounds, which were surrounded by a moat.

A boy about fourteen spoke English in that building and he offered to send a boy with me to the Morning Star school, a convent! Well, I figured from the Sisters I could find the Jesuits so we started again. By this time we had been travelling through the waste lands and ruins of Tokyo, 56 square miles of it, burnt out, for over two hours and were apparently no nearer to my destination; the six officers in the rear of the truck were seeing the city from a travelling van but they didn't mind.

Our driver didn't mind either, but he did confess to a bit of uneasiness when I asked how much gas we had. We never knew when we might run out for the gas gauge was broken. The truck was a good one, but took the holes in the road to the ultimate depth. We bowled along merrily.

Around the Imperial grounds we drove [and] my guide brought us into a school where there were a lot of youngsters. The teacher was dressed like all other Japs, couldn't speak English any more than I could Japanese, but we did manage to get along in French. He identified himself as a Marist Brother, I as a Jesuit, then we had another handshake. I told him I wanted the Jesuit University. He said he would bring me there himself. He got in alongside of [our driver]; I hung on the outside of him and away we jounced until after fifteen minutes of riding by the usual rubble and neatly piled corrugated tin and the shacks of a thousand dumpvilles where the homeless were trying to get a shelter, we saw a big brown building that looked something like Loose Wiles factory on Causeway St., Boston, with more windows than brick, and there was St. Sophia University. There I met half a dozen priests and then Fr. [Bruno] Bitter of Heythrop College, England days. A French Jesuit brought me to him who, incidentally, said that the school numbered about 1500 during peace time; their enrollment had slumped badly, but now was picking up. Catholics in Tokyo numbered about 10,000. Most of the enrollment was non-Catholic.³²¹

The corridors of the faculty residence were much the same as any Jesuit house all over the world. Long and high as any and the room of Fr. F. X. Bosch, S.J. like any other priest's in a college; books, prie-dieu, bed, crucifix, Office and picture of Our Lady conspicuous, a simple room, simply furnished. Fortunately the fire had not touched the new building of the University, but the old. Miraculously it seemed, for in front of the college there was nothing but devastation. The French Father said that if it had not been for the Emperor pressing the issue, the Military would have fought to the last man. He insisted on peace and happily he had his way. In fact, he said, it would not surprise him if some day he became a Catholic; he is very favorable.

³²¹ The Loose-Wiles biscuit company occupied a brick warehouse on Causeway Street in Boston's North End. The building still stands and is today part of a condominium complex. Sophia University, founded by the Jesuits in 1913, is today a selective private institution in Japan, with some 12,000 undergraduate and graduate students. As was the case when Foley visited, the majority of students are not Catholic. Bruno Bitter (1898-1988), a German Jesuit who Foley had studied with at Heythrop College, was Sophia's rector from 1942 to 1948. He served during the post-war years as the Holy See's envoy to the American occupation forces and was an informal advisor on Japanese culture to General Douglas MacArthur, who administered the occupation.

The visit with the priests was over in ten minutes when I found that my Marist friend had deserted me, having done his kind deed.

We started back through the debris on both sides of the fire-bombed city and dropped off our Jap boy with five yen and a package of cigarettes.

A visit to a department store outside of which we had our picture taken didn't reveal anything but 5 and 10 goods, except for some prints, three of which I purchased.

Then we started back for the docks, picking up sailors and officers along the way. Just as we were about to get into the dock area, we ran out of gas, coasting to a stop in front of another Jap truck, smacked it gently, and then answered the smiling question in English of the Jap, "Where did you get the truck?" "On the dock here, thank you."

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 1945

We shove off for Okinawa today at half past eight in the morning, with about forty passengers aboard for further transfer to home and to Leyte and way stations via Okinawa. We learn today that we are to remain in commission as a major war vessel. One third of the fleet will be kept in an active status, another third in reserve and one third will be de-commissioned.

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 1945

We cruise around outside the nets off Buckner Bay, Okinawa, waiting for a berth to be assigned to us, when finally the Captain goes in and picks his own berth.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 1945

Ashore to contact men who are brothers of men aboard ship. Failed but met Arthur Doyle from Chestnut Hill, B.C. graduate, now pilot aboard the USS Antietam with Fr. Zimmer as Chaplain who still can't say Mass occasionally on Sunday due to the opposition of his Executive Officer and Captain. Over-

head are innumerable dogfights in the sky as our men playfully tangle with each other, now that the war is over.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 1945

Up anchor to Pearl Harbor with a total passenger complement of 656 who are berthed in cots on our hangar deck. They are a mud-stained group, cold, dirty and wet as they come up the gangway, but a shower and a clean up of their gear make them new men. On the way music from band of USS Arkansas who have been chasing their ship for four months. Jam sessions at night, songfests and movies.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 2, 1945

Second Thursday, since we are crossing the 180th meridian. Smoker on Hangar Deck; boxing skits, orchestra of USS Arkansas boys. Are they good!

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 5, 1945

Learn that they have made me Lt. Cmdr.³²²

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 6, 1945

Four P.M. – Arrive Pearl Harbor.

In an interview with Steve O'Brien on March 7, 1995, Foley said, "In the Navy, when you went in as a priest, you went in as a man, and you were a complete stranger to the people with whom you associated, and the other way around, too. . . . There was no deference or respect for you except as a Naval officer. But as a priest you were Joe Zilch, and only when they sized you up, when they said what kind of person is he, then you were accepted. How you would stand up under very trying situations. In wartime the word would be passed around, how did so-and-so stand up. That helped me to grow as a man. Being placed in a completely strange situation, no different from the other men. And they finally found out just by the way you behaved. I grew. And I am very happy that I did it." Asked in the same interview if he'd had difficulty adjusting to civilian life after the war, he replied, somewhat equivocally, "Thank God I was never disturbed psychologically . . . maybe later."

³²² Equivalent to an Army rank of Major.

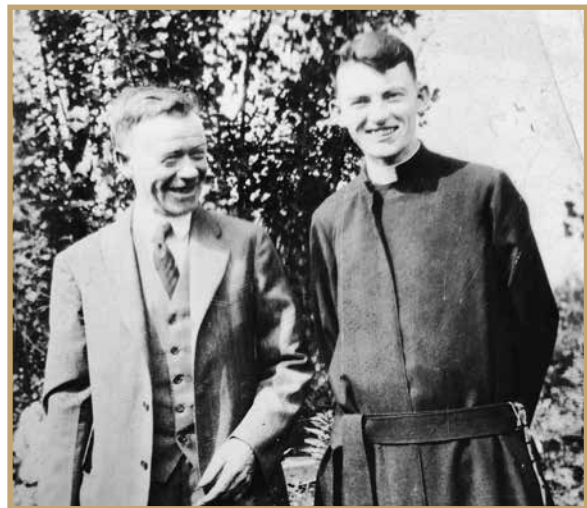
PHOTOGRAPHS



Foley's youngest brother, Lt. Edward C. Foley, U.S., Army, who was posted to Guadalcanal for much of the war and whom John visited as often as the Clymer weighed anchor off the island. John supplied his brother with such valuables as steaks, oranges, ice cream, and cigars from the Clymer larder. Edward Foley would graduate from Boston College in 1966.



Left to right: Foley, his sister Mary, his mother Catharine, and his brothers Francis and Joseph in the backyard of their home in Somerville, Massachusetts.

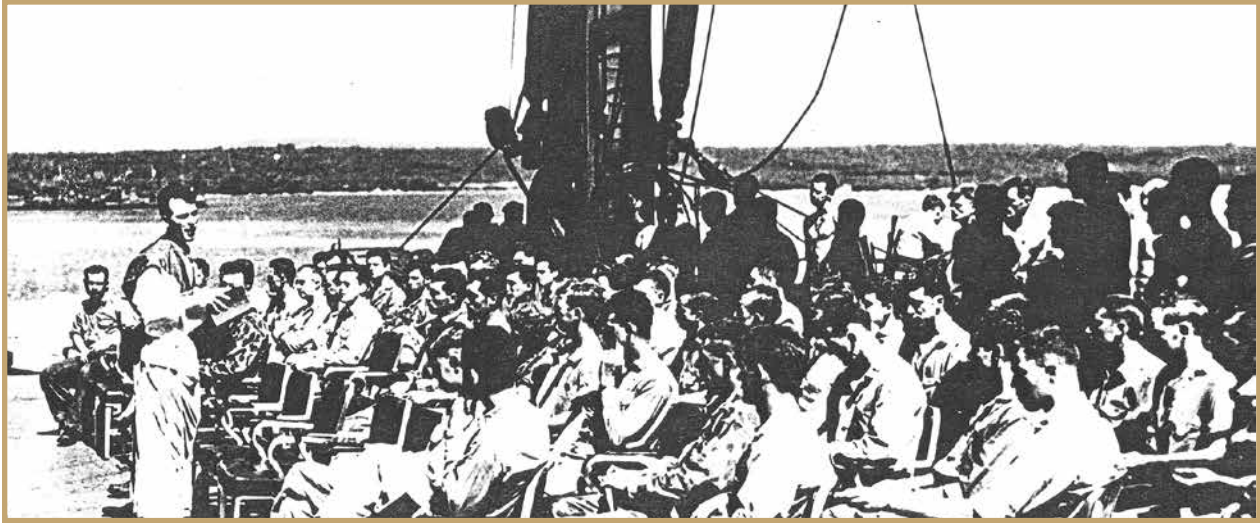


John Foley with his father Francis Foley, Sr., at "Shadowbrook," the Jesuit novitiate in Lenox, Massachusetts, c. 1923.

Photo credits: Pages 233 and 234, Foley Family. Pages 235 and 236, United States Navy. Page 237, Foley Family (top) and United States Navy.



Fr. Foley, in late April or early May 1943, with three French missionaries and two of their wards who'd been rescued from Bougainville by an American ship and then transferred to the Clymer. The women's names, which Foley recorded at the bottom of the photo, are Sr. Martien, Sr. Ignatius, and Sr. Adelberta. The children are identified as Dorothea Solutu and Aloysius Chinyung. Charmed by the children—particularly the indefatigable Aloysius—the Clymer crew presented Foley with “a bomb helmet full of bills and change” to be given to the sisters for the benefit of their charges.



Fr. Foley saying Mass on the deck of the Clymer while anchored off the island of Espirtu Santo just prior to the Bougainville invasion on November 1, 1942. The men before him are mostly Marines. On the night before the invasion Foley heard confessions until past midnight, and on the next morning “distributed Holy Communion as Viaticum for 25 minutes immediately after Reveille.” The landing took place at 7:30 a.m. By late morning, Foley was offering Last Sacraments to the gravely wounded who’d been returned from the beach and whose confessions he’d heard the previous evening. The battle for the island eventually engaged 144,000 American troops and would not conclude until Japan surrendered.



A 1952 photograph of Foley at a ceremony in New York City, where he was presented with a print of a painting, commissioned by the Navy, that draws on Navy photographs of Foley saying Mass on the Clymer.

(See photo above)



The USS George Clymer, an attack transport, on which Foley served from June 1942 to April 1944.



Foley presides at a memorial service on the lower deck of the Vella Gulf in memory of Marine Lt. Edward C. Grove, a pilot who died in a take-off accident on May 12, 1945. Grove, the ship's first casualty, is represented by an empty chair in the front row, and his fellow pilots are seated in the first four rows. In one of his interviews with Steve O'Brien, Foley recalls that he said a Mass for Groves, who was a Protestant.



The USS Vella Gulf, an aircraft carrier on which Foley served from April 1945 until war's end. His note at the bottom edge of the photograph reads "Our ship — spanking new."

Our Ship - Spanking New.

Acknowledgements

The editors are indebted to William P. Leahy, S.J., President of Boston College, for his support of our work on “For God and Country,” Jesuit Fr. John P. Foley’s diary account of his life as a U.S. Navy chaplain in the North African and Pacific theaters of war during World War II.

We are also grateful to David Winkler, Archivist at the Naval Archives; to David Miros and Ann Kanke, of the Jesuit Archives at St. Louis University; to Alice Howe, retired Archivist of the New England Province Archives at the College of the Holy Cross, who provided us with the transcript of the diary, and to Dennis P. Foley and Maureen Dwyer, nephew and niece, respectively, of Fr. Foley. We are grateful, too, for the assistance of Associate Vice President Jack Dunn and Senior Associate Director Brock Dilworth, both of the Office of University Communications.

And we are in particular debt to our Graphic Designer Bobbi Bloom.

The Editors

Joseph P. Duffy, S.J., served in various capacities at Boston College for 42 years, 20 as Secretary of the University. He is the editor of three other on-line books based on the 20th-century military and diplomatic service of New England Jesuits. These can be found at the Joseph P. Duffy Collection of Digital Works at the Jesuit Archives and Research Center. (<https://jesuitarchives.omeka.net/collections/show/3>)

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