

Refer to No.

U. S. S. BLACK HAWK
Asiatic Station
Via Seattle, Washington

Shanghai, China,
25 February 1932.

Dear Charlie:-

I've got a flock of different stamps here which I collected for you, and looking through them tonight I thought now would be a good time to write and say hello and how are you and all the family. Helyn receives letters quite regularly from your mother and always sends me the news from Mattapoissett in her letters or sends the letters from Matta right on to me. I enjoy them real much, and Helyn does too, and many is the time we sit together and recall the good time we had while in Matta. While down in Manila in the dead of winter it was "just pleasant" during the evenings, the days were quite warm, and we were usually lathered in sweat, we often remarked that it would be a real pleasure to be back in Massachusetts or dear old Pennsylvania for some snow and cold weather. I certainly miss it. But on the other hand we are now in Shanghai. That is, I am along with the ship, - Helyn and Lionel remained in ~~Shanghai~~ Manila. It is plenty cold up here and is not to be compared with Manila except to state that the change within six days was quite sudden and took our breath away. The average temperature since our arrival on the 9th of this month, has been about 35 degrees. Only one or two days did it drop down to about 26 degrees.

Since our arrival Helyn, in her letters, states that the climate in Manila is becoming warmer. But I do not envy her. She reports all O.K. down there with her and Lionel; that she has finished taking her typhoid shots and that Lionel just started taking his, also his vaccination. Due to the existing situation in and around Shanghai, Helyn will not be up here until it abates or is finished entirely. And our prospects of returning to Manila are very slim, as this evening's paper states that the Japs are bringing in more troops to repel the Chinese. It certainly is a hashed up affair in many ways, and it is felt that if the U.S. and the other great powers do not take action soon why there will be another great war.

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At present time we are tied up alongside the Chinese Merchants Wharf, East. in the Whangpoo river. This wharf is on the opposite side of the city of Shanghai, this part being known as the "Chinese City". We have quite a few entertainers come down "ship side" every other day or so and exhibiting their skill at slight-of-hand and acrobatics. Some of the troupes consist of only one man in charge of a group of small boys - boys who probably are not more than eight years of age. One fellow who comes quite regularly has a stunt where he pulls a live snake through his nostrils and lets it protude from his mouth, the snakes head either rapped around his ear or dangling from his mouth. This is a most gruesome sight at first. Then there are other Chinese who come aboard (after obtaining a pass, of course) and sell their wares. Shoes, hosiery, newspapers, postage stamps (Chinese) (the Chinese post office here being closed the best part of the time and mail is not to be entrusted with them); then we have others who take care of our laundry and still others who press our clothes. They do real good jobs for a very small price. And still are quite content with their prices.

At this wharf there are a number of ~~wh~~ warehouses mostly filled with grains and flour. We see the Chinese carrying this grain and flour back and forth daily - unloading one ship and loading another which in turn takes it up the Yangtze River and to other coast ports. While at work the Chinks are usually always humming or chanting some sort of tune, never, apparently, tiring of either the tune or the work.

But this must be rather tiresome reading. Not being a writer of any note I am sorry that I cannot put the ring into my words to make them appear as I would have them. On the whole things here are quite interesting - new sights, a different people entirely than one would expect to meet. Their dress is terrible - most all Chinese are poor. These out on the dock and running through the streets are poor. Some dress with shoes made of rags, burlap, or a felt shoe and without stockings - in this cold many are in their barefeet and are very dirty. They, to look at them and not to know, are very stout. But this is only due to the number of clothes and cloths they have wound around their bodies. Some I dare say wear as many as four or five suits of clothing.

Of course I am no reporter⁶ and am only quoting from the newspapers and what information I pick up from others - making all news heresay. On the other hand it is curtailing our liberty ashore. We are permitted to send ashore daily only ten per-cent of the total crew, which from the Black Hawk makes about 68 men daily, and about 8 officers. Then our liberty begins from the ship at 1:00 p.m. and expires on the dock at 6:00 p.m. Considering that the ride to the dock takes 20 minutes you can readily see that there is not much time for us ashore. Liberty began today again after it was stopped by the Commander-in-Chief last Saturday because there were shells dropping in the International Settlement. Also it is a known fact that to a few of us that the Italian ship of war "Libia" was struck with a Chink shell. In a report from our Commander-in-Chief to the Navy Department the commanding officer of the "Libia" stated he would train his guns and fire them on whoever fired on his ship again. It seems that these small incidents are not so small after all. No one was hurt, it is reported, but the fact remains that an Italian ship was struck with a shell regardless whether it was meant to strike the vessel or meant for some other object, Jap or what have you.

The city is patrolled with soldiers and sailors of most all nationals. Included among those present are the British, French, American, Italian, Portugese, Japanese, Russian, and probably others of which I have no knowledge. Morning colors music takes about ten minutes of "standing at attention" for those unfortunates caught without overhead covering.

I was fortunate to make one liberty so far. There are so many places here that are out of bounds that one doesn't know whether to keep on going or turn around and go back to the ship. But I was with a fellow who has been in this place nine or ten times already and we got along quite well. The best places are closed - restricted area. Very few of the Chinese shops are open for business, they effecting the Japanese boycott. There are a number of British stores of all descriptions which are open, however. But we did not bother to go in. Went to a small cabaret and had a few hot-rums and then in one of those two-wheeled carriages called rickshas for a ride about town. Came to a number of barbed wire entanglements and sand-bag barring the way - all guarded by different sailors and soldiers of different nations. Then back to the ship again.

Things here are exceedingly cheap. Ever so much cheaper than they are in the states or anywhere else, I guess. For instance shoes and boots (leather) - prices range from \$6. to \$15 Mex. That is about \$1.50 to \$4.00 gold or U.S. money, the shoes and boots being made for each individuals measurement. Clothing is very cheap too. Another thing is suitcases. One of the men in the office here bought a suitcase of enormous size and wonderful leather and fittings for Mex.\$18.00 or about \$4.50 gold.

On the other side of the ship, toward the water, we find sampans or small boats containing whole families. These people wander up and down the river continually, are permitted ashore only during certain hours of the day and not at night. They cook, live, sleep and - well, they live in these boats. The women work the oars or sails as well as the men. They depend on their chow from whatever they are able to pick up out of the river and catch from the different ships slop-chutes. They utilize most everything and anything that they can get hold of. And still the poor devils are happy despite all this. They are always smiling.

A letter came in the other day ~~manila~~ from the Commander in Chief asking how many refugees we would be able to handle if it becomes necessary, for transportation to either Hongkong (south china) or Manila. So it looks like that will be just another one of the jobs for the Black Hawk. However, this is not to be construed that we are going to take them right away. Only that the CinC wants to know now for when a necessity arises. From Manila we transported quite a bit of ammunition, and trucks, canned foods and meats for the Marines and Soldiers up here. Also quantities of food stuff for the Destroyer squadron of which the Black Hawk is tender ship. Our trip up was quite rough and very cold for us - on top of this we had no radiators at all in the ship which were installed. So they got busy and installed a few, then went ashore and bought about 30 electric heaters and other material for making heaters, and installed them. But the ship was never meant for a navy transport, and especially not meant for cold weather. Prior to this time the ship has always been based in Manila during the winter and went to Chefoo during the summer. We were scheduled to go to the Navy Yard next month (March) but this has been cancelled and if nothing doesn't happen to break up this fighting soon why we expect it will be another nine months before going back to Manila for overhaul which we need badly.

Many times during both the day and night we can hear the firing from where we are located. At night we are able to see many fires illuminating the skies. Just some more of the Japs doings. On the way into Shanghai we passed the fort at Woosung - there were many Jap destroyers and cruisers lying just off the fort; Jap planes were in the air and dropping bombs intermittently. Coming up the river we not only found the river overcrowded with shipping but along the shore line many places where buildings had been burned, shattered by shell, and other buildings crumpled to the ground. The Japs seem to have no mercy for poor Chinks who have nothing at all to do with the affair - killing women and children ~~and even women~~ along with those poor men who are unable to get out of the way of their bombs, etc.

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But here we are on on the fifth page - and I've told about all I know from out this way. Why not drop me a line when you have finished beddin' down those cattle and got the wood cut and into the house. I sure would like to hear from you folks up there and know all that is going on. Just won't ever forget your hospitality even though I always leave it up to Helyn to answer any letters received. Let's see in her last letter she mentioned receiving one from Clara - no I think it was Mrs. Fuller - anyway the person mentioned that Louis was up and around again and got outside occasionally. I sure am sorry for Louis and Dot and the Kiddies and hope that Louis gets better before the spring comes on again. He sure has had it tough. Your youngsters were quite sick too, I hear. Are they all well again, and going to school? Tell everybody that I was asking for them and hope to see them again within a couple years - just as soon as we get back from here anyway, then I think I'll get something around Boston or Newport. Give Helyn's best regards too, she would have it that way were she here to say so. Don't often get to writing and aside of this letter to you cannot remember writing to anybody else except to Helyn and one letter to my father, so when you see Ted, Albert, Louis, Floyd, your ~~berate~~ brother whose name I can never seem to remember and all the others, give them my best.

Been doing any trick wheel riding lately?

As ever yours,

Brownie
Brownie.

P.S. Helyn and I think it best to address any mail for either of us ~~as usual~~ in care of myself. That is, if there is a letter for her just put my address on the outside of the envelope. This is due to the many addresses which we have had in Manila - and that we are not sure she will stay there for long, or when she will move. My address will be -

U.S.S. Black Hawk, Asiatic Station,
c/o Postmaster, Seattle, Washington.

(over)

B.

There are a number of ~~dupes~~
stamps here of the same denomination.
I send them along thinking possibly you
can "trade or swap" them off to some
other collector.

The group of four stamps - brown color,
1/2 cent Washington were sent from a
collector who wanted ^{us} to ~~to~~ cancel
two other stamps for him.

B.