

LEST WE FORGET...

DEPARTMENT  
MAR 26 2002  
LIBRARY



Written by men and women of every rank and age, who share alike the Navy's blue and gold and its imperishable traditions, these messages deserve the widest possible reading here at home. Their texts are the more revealing because they were never intended for publication—their eloquence the more stirring for its simplicity. Reading between these lines we cannot fail to see our debt to these countrymen of ours who lived, and often died, the American way.

*Frank Knox*  
SECRETARY OF THE NAVY

# *My luck can't last much longer!"*

*Excerpt from a letter to a friend written by Ensign William R. Evans, Jr., of Torpedo Squadron 8 shortly before he was reported missing in action at the Battle of Midway, June 4th, 1942.*



"Many of my friends are now dead. To a man each died with a nonchalance that each would have denied was courage, but simply called a lack of fear and forgot the triumph.

"If anything good or great has been born of this war, it should not be valued in the colonies we may win, nor in the pages that historians will attempt to writé, but rather in the youth of our country who were never trained for war, and who almost never believed in war, but who have, from some hidden source, brought forth a gallantry which is homespun, it is so real.

"I say these things to you because I know you liked and understood boys, and because I want you to know that they have not let you down. Out here, between the spaceless sea and sky, American youth has found itself, and given of itself, so that a home spark may catch, burst into flame, and burn high. If our country takes these sacrifices with indifference, it will be the cruelest ingratitude the world has ever known.

"Remembering the countless happy hours I spent with all of you has been a constant source of contentment . . . My luck can't last much longer. But the flame goes on and only that is important."

*"If I don't get back, you will have to be mother's protector!"*

*Excerpt from the last letter of Commander John J. Shea to his 5-year-old son Jackie. Commander Shea, who was aboard the aircraft carrier "WASP", was reported missing following action on September 15th, 1942.*



"It is too bad that this war could not have been delayed a few more years so that I could grow up again with you and do all the things I planned to do when you were old enough to go to school.

"I miss you too, more than anyone will ever know. When you are a little bigger you will know why your daddy is not home so much any more.

"Fighting for the defense of our country, ideals, and homes is an honor and a duty which your daddy has to do before he can come home and settle down with you and mother. So wait a little longer.

"In the meantime, take care of your Mother and grow up to be a good young man. Study hard when you go to school. Be a leader in everything good in life. Play fair always. Be a good Catholic and you can't help being a good American.

"If I don't get back, you will have to be Mother's protector because you will be the only one she has. You must grow up to take my place as well as your own in her life and heart.

"Last of all, don't ever forget your Daddy. Pray for him to come back and, if it is God's will that he does not, be the kind of boy and man your Daddy wants you to be."

# *"In the deafening din, I remembered the men on Wake Island"*

*Excerpt from Marine Corps Private Albert Schmid's account of action at Guadalcanal. Credited with killing over 200 Japs, Schmid was awarded the Navy Cross for his part in this battle in which he himself was blinded.*



"Our machine gun was positioned on the river bank where the stream was only 50 yards wide. Suddenly a huge bobbing mass scurried into the river. The Japs were starting to cross. 'No you don't, not tonight,' I whispered.

"Johnny Rivers swept our gun to and fro and the wading Japs crumbled. Except for some antitank fire upstream, we were the only opposition in our sector. Then Johnny got it in the face and I grabbed the gun.

"In the almost deafening din, I remembered the men on Wake Island. I swept my fire evenly across group after group of crack Jap troops. Lee Diamond was loading furiously when they got him. He fell across my legs. So I alternately loaded and fired. The gun got blistering hot in my hands. It made cracking and spitting noises. But it kept working right up to the end.

"I had just mowed down a particularly big party when all hell broke loose in our hole. Something struck me in the face. My helmet was knocked off. Everything became dark. I put my hands to my face and eyes. I felt blood and raw flesh.

"While we lay there, the Japs in the trees fired a steady downpour of bullets. It seemed my head would split open from pain. I strained my eyes, but I couldn't see. I worked around trying to get my .45 in my hand.

"Diamond kept saying, 'Keep down! Keep down!'

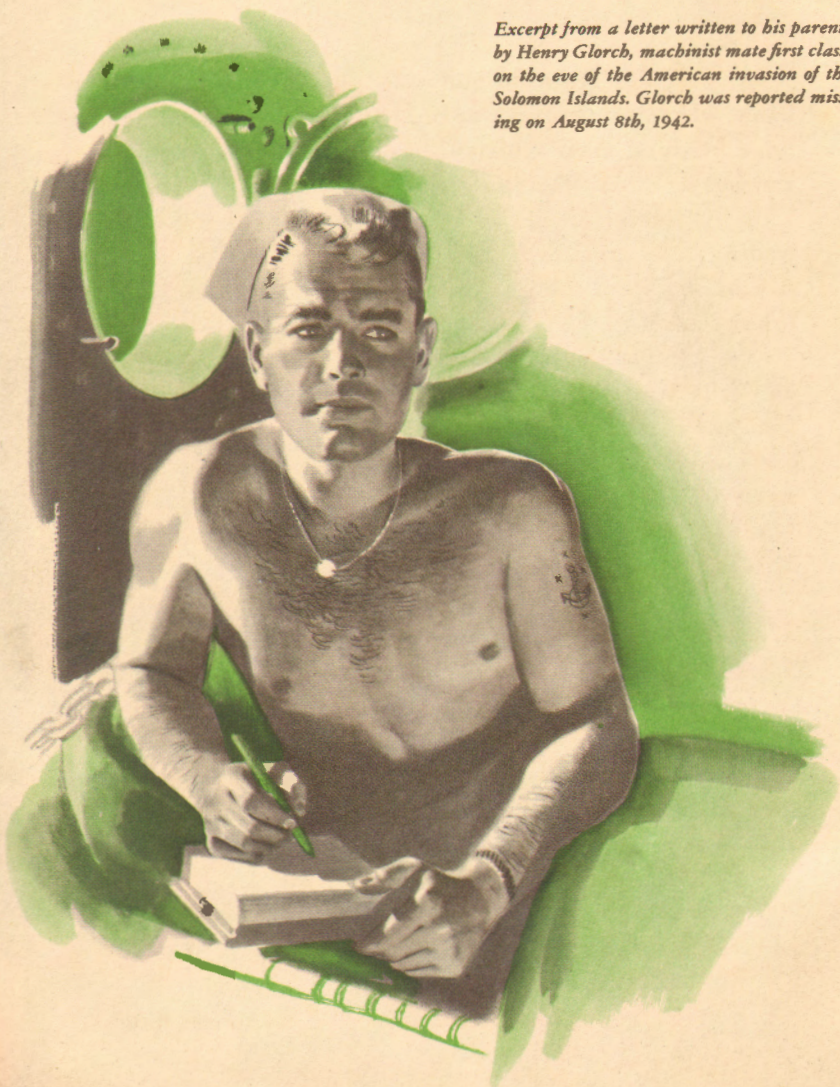
"I said, 'The first Jap that jumps in here will be on the receiving end of this.'

"'But you can't see!'

"'Yell which way he comes—I'll try to get him!'"

# *"At dawn tomorrow we are going in!"*

*Excerpt from a letter written to his parents by Henry Glorch, machinist mate first class, on the eve of the American invasion of the Solomon Islands. Glorch was reported missing on August 8th, 1942.*



"This is one letter I hope you never get. Funny way to start a letter, isn't it? But it's the best I can do under the circumstances, because if you do get it, that will mean that I have been very unfortunate.

"Tomorrow I will have the honor to participate in Uncle Sam's first move of retaliation against the Japs. And believe me I can't wait. We have been preparing for this for a long time and now the time has come to quit practicing and start doing. At dawn tomorrow we are going in and land United States Marines by the carload on the Japanese-held Solomon Islands.

"Our job, of course, is to get them to the beach as fast and as many as we can. And we'll do it if we have to swim ashore with the marines on our back. Because I don't think in history a bunch of men have gone into any engagement as cool and calm and confident as this group. There is only one answer. It will be a success.

"As I write this I want you to know that I am not writing because I have any premonition of anything happening to me. I'm just writing because in case I do get mine, you'll know I got it like a man, and I am not afraid to die for my country.

"Believe that and please don't grieve, for this will all soon be over. I have only one regret, and that is I could not see you once more. I loved my mother and father and family more than I ever said."

# *"We weren't afraid of the planes not that first time!"*

*Excerpt from a speech given at a war plant by Lieutenant (jg) Ann A. Bernatitus, only Navy Nurse to escape from the Philippines, and first person in the naval service to win the Legion of Merit award*



"Our hospital in Bataan was small, much too small for the number of wounded. Those who couldn't be bedded inside were put in cots in the open field. As many men were dying from sickness as from wounds. Bandages and gauze were so scarce that we washed out the old ones and used them again.

"That was the way matters stood the morning the Jap planes came over. We weren't afraid of the planes—not that first time. We had put huge red crosses to mark the hospital buildings and the fields.

"The Japs swept down very low. They couldn't have missed the crosses and they didn't miss the beds. Our men lay in the sun and waited for death from the sky.

"One terrible day we had 285 patients on our tables in 8 hours—a new patient every 2 minutes. One sailor was brought in with his abdomen blown to bits. 'Doctor,' he asked, 'is there any hope at all?' The doctor said reassuringly, 'We'll do everything we can.' The sailor tried to roll over. 'Doc,' he begged, 'get me off this table and save one of those other fellows who still has a fighting chance.'

"Those men on Bataan deserve to be remembered. Not with flowers and memorials. It's too late for flowers and the monuments can wait. Remember them *now* by sending guns and planes and ships and tanks to other Americans wherever they're fighting. *That's* the way the men at Bataan would like to be remembered. Don't ever forget Bataan. Don't ever let it happen again to American fighting men any place in the world."

# *"All the boys I saw were carrying on like men!"*

*Excerpt from one of the last letters to his wife written by Rear Admiral Norman Scott, killed in action off Guadalcanal on the night of November 13th, 1942. Admiral Scott was posthumously awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor.*



“Not so long ago I visited a hospital ship where a number of our wounded bluejackets and marines were being cared for. The ship was anchored in a port a long way from home.

“These words are intended as a tribute to the wounded I visited and for the information of the families with men in the Navy. I know that some of them are considered boys by their families, but all those I saw were carrying on like men.

“It has never been my privilege to have been received in the Navy—or any place else, for that matter—with such quiet friendliness and courtesy. Even those who were at the moment in pain would grind out ‘I’ll be all right!’

“Not once during the entire visit was I answered with a grumble or a bellyache or a whine, but invariably with a grin or at least an attempt at one. Sometimes the answer would be low, and I would lean well over to make the conversation easier going. It might take a few seconds, and then I would hear ‘I’m going pretty well, thank you, sir.’ One like that and your heart goes right out to him.

“It is a custom in the Navy to remove one’s cap in the sick bay. Mine will always be off to those men.”



*"Some of those pilots who didn't come back could have come back!"*

*Excerpt from a description of the Battle of Midway, as told by Lieutenant Robert Laub at an American war plant. Lieutenant Laub was awarded the Navy Cross for extraordinary heroism.*



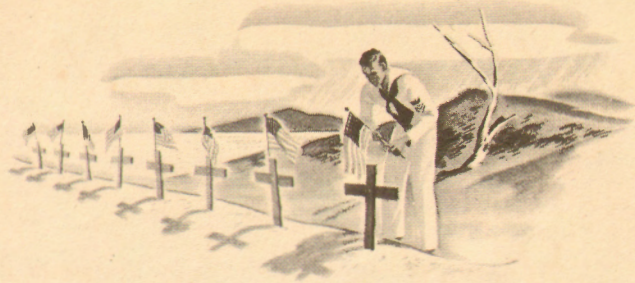
"Our torpedo squadrons were the first of the naval striking forces to contact the enemy at Midway. This was our chance to pay the Japs back for Pearl Harbor and we didn't mean to miss.

"Three Jap Zero planes came at me as I dove towards their carrier. My gunner shot down one and the other two veered off. About 800 yards from the carrier and 50 feet over the water, I launched my torpedo. It seemed to be heading straight for the carrier. Then I got out of there—*fast*.

"When I arrived at my carrier I found that only four out of fourteen planes in my squadron had returned safely. You people remember Midway as a great victory. I keep thinking of those ten pilots and ten gunners who didn't get back.

"Our squadron was flying old planes that day, planes that weren't nearly as fast or as well protected as our new machines. But when we returned to Pearl Harbor after the battle we found new planes for the whole squadron waiting for us on the field.

"That's what hurts. If someone had worked a little harder back home, if there hadn't been a delay somewhere along the line, we might have had those planes in time for the battle. And maybe—who can tell—maybe some of those ten pilots and ten gunners who *didn't* come back—*could* have come back."



## THE LAST HOUR OF THE WAR

No one knows when the last hour of the war will come. But ending the war soon—pulling the end closer to us even by an hour—can mean life or death to thousands. In one hour a machine gunner can deal out more than 10,000 bullets. In one hour an antiaircraft gun crew can fire more than 500 shells. Every hour of the war is important, but ending the war even one hour sooner can be your goal and mine.

No one knows exactly what happened in World War I, in that last hour between ten and eleven a. m. on November 11th. But throughout the morning of November 11th, according to casualty lists, 1,021 American boys were either killed in action or severely wounded.

Tonight and tomorrow, the hours you put in speeding production are the most important hours in your service to your country. They may be the most important in your personal lives. Perhaps someone you knew and loved was killed on the morning of November 11th, 1918. Perhaps someone you know and love will remain alive in the last hour of the war because you did what you could tonight and tomorrow.