

Honolulu, T.H. [Territory of Hawaii]
December 8, 41 [1941]

Dearest Mother and Dad,

Yesterday seems like a dream and still I can hardly realize that we are in war and that an enemy force is trying to take these islands. I am amazed at the daring of the Japanese although not at all surprised at the treachery. The wonder to me is that our navy did not know more.

Today has been quiet and so was last night except for a raid about nine o'clock. A bomb fell on our campus at that time but it did not hit any of the buildings. We prepared for the worst, sleeping in our clothes. I know I went to sleep but it was the kind of sleep that makes you feel as though you were awake all night. I seemed to be milling over different things the whole night long. John slept but he talked in his sleep and cried out. At four in the morning we got up, I got his breakfast in the dark and he started off again in the dark for Pearl Harbor. How I hated to see him go for I was so afraid the raids would begin at any time.

Today I have seen more of our planes but still not very many. Perhaps they are going in different directions. Heaven knows that I hope so.

Dick Carter stopped in yesterday about four-thirty or five. He had business (he is connected with Fort Shafter) in this section so he decided to go a little out of his way and see how we were. He told a horrible tale of what was happening at the Fort Shafter Morgue. He said it was evident that the boys were just having an easy going Sunday morning – from the kind of clothing they had been wearing. While he was here, I heard the familiar sound of John's little Willys coming up our driveway and I do not ever remember hearing anything more welcome. He got home much sooner than I had expected but the orders were that those who had gone through the worst were to go home until the next morning.

His experience had been very horrible and I imagine it will be a long time before he is back to his old self again. He heard the unusual explosions coming from Ford Island way, went out to see what was up and beheld the Japanese planes flying no more than 50 feet off the ground coming right before him. The Ogoolala [USS Oglala] was blown up right before his eyes and the men worked hard to get all the men off before she turned over on her side and sank. They were not entirely successful. That ship was tied up to the dock. Then they got three battle ships and three cruisers, and some destroyers. John cannot bear the thought of seeing our beautiful big ships sent to the bottom with just funnels sticking out of the water. Later in the morning he was called to try to move the huge crane so they could push a ship out of the way or something but the electric cable had been broken so they tried to do it another way just as more Japanese planes came. He ran to as much cover as he could find but it wasn't enough for from the rear of the planes flying low they machine gunned at him and one young man. The bullets so close lent wings to their feet and they threw themselves over some sort of a high iron wall or something so that they were between that and some cement. A piece of shrapnel came through a hole and scraped his side but not seriously, thank goodness. It was painted with disinfectant down there. He dug the shrapnel out of the cement after all was quiet and brought it home. I had no idea how jagged and heavy they would be.

They fought fires and did all kinds of things all day. The last big raid came at about twelve o'clock. His praise for the boys on the USS Pennsylvania knows no bounds. He said that they were at their posts so quick that he cannot even know now how they managed to do it. They had their pom-poms [anti-aircraft guns] at work almost immediately. That ship happened to be in drydock. It was not hit by bombs but the two destroyers were; otherwise the drydock might have been wrecked. It wasn't.

Perhaps you had better not tell too much of what I have written because I do not know whether or not I am telling what our government would prefer not to be told. It is generally known around here

now because so many either say what happened from the heights nearer Pearl Harbor or were, in a few cases right there, as John was. We are all just sick at the damage done.

The landing fields were badly treated and they are working hard on them. We are really not very well informed as to what is happening to the fleet that is doing all this destruction. I hope something is being done!

The islands have been put under military rule and from time to time the radio tells us what we are to do and not to do. Radios are left on all day but they are silent except for military announcements. Once in a while some small item of news reaches us. We shall now depend on mainland broadcasts more than ever. Last night we listened to KFI [Los Angeles radio station AM 640] and realized what a conservative report was being given.

Of course bombs have fallen on the city and many people have been killed or wounded. Things seem to be getting well under control but there are line-ups at all the food stores. I went down the hill to get some bread and was glad I had enough food so that it was unnecessary to join the line. Now the orders have come that we must continue to trade at our regular markets and these markets will be allowed to sell only to regular customers and in turn will be able to get only their normal supply from their wholesale houses.

A recent broadcast said that there had been no raids on Pearl Harbor or other sections. Anyone harboring any enemy will be treated as a traitor.

John will be allowed to leave there at six o'clock tonight. That means a long trip home in the dark which worries me. Then we shall eat in the dark again as we did last night. The blackout was certainly complete! I shall be better organized for tonight than I was last night. I was not good for much last night, or at any time during the day. When John came home I was so thankful. Those of our friends who come by thought that he might never be able to come through. I had been afraid of the same thing.

We are not allowed to use the telephone unless for something special. I called in school but there is nothing to do. Everything is organized and being taken care of by those living on the campus. I shall see what tomorrow brings before making any plans.

Do not worry unduly for now things are really organized as they have not been and the whole island is on its toes. I am sure that the army and navy will handle the situation much better – now that they know the enemy has arrived.

This is not the way I planned to send your Christmas presents to you but for now, this is the best I can do. Please cash the check, keep fifteen dollars for yourselves, dividing it equally between you two and take the other three dollars and divide it equally between Hugh and Eloise. All this takes the Christmas spirit out of things only I want you to get something you may want.

I am so glad you are not here. It isn't that I am afraid to be here but it is nice to know that you are safer where you are just now. John is in the dangerous place. That is all I can worry about, or rather it is all I want to have to worry about. It will all end right I know, only it is hard to really know war has actually begun.

Much, much love to you all and have a Merry, Merry Christmas even if you do wish we were with you, as I know you do. We are together here and we love it here and this will all be over eventually.

Love from,
Beth