

Saunthorpe England
February 17, 1945

Dear Mrs. Loring,

I have just completed a letter to Mrs. Holmes in Athens, Ga. and while I am writing I will take opportunity to write this one to you. Although the pictures aren't finished it is best that I write now and then send the picture later.

The first time that I met Mr. Hill was in Solomon Island. The first impression of him as an officer wasn't very appealing but I was to learn later while serving under him that he was all man. In our division the rules of the Navy aren't so strict. Rules will not make the engine run and he knew that. As the time went by we became better friends which doesn't work so good between a Comm. officer and the enlisted personnel though after all he wasn't an officer at heart and was only there to do the duties that he had been assigned to do. If he had been more strict in military duties I may not have become to think of him as I did and he would have been just another officer that was killed that night instead of a man that I greatly admired and will forever remember him for what he really was; a man instead of a gold braid.

We were both about the same age and were only here to do our duty and then go back to

Civil life and the same we love.

you may know of our last night yet I will tell what I know about it and that may or may not add to your information.

We left a town in southern England and were to go out for landing exercises. We were fully loaded with Army material and personnel. After leaving in early morning and traveling until 0115 we were without alarm of any kind. Suddenly G. 2. rang and we left for battle stations of which I shared with two more and Mr Hill in the engine room. That was over as a false alarm at 0130 but we were not secured until about 0145. I went to bed not knowing what was happening. Mr Hill was in his quarters resting also. Between 0205 and 0210 the first torpedo struck and later followed by another. Some time later I got topside and got aboard a raft and aided the others also. There were about twenty six men with the raft. One officer of the small boat crew was with the raft that I was on. We finally got away from the fire drifted for about six hours until a British boat picked us up. Medical treatment for shock and small wounds were treated the lesser wounded and the others were sent to a hospital for further study and treatment.

We finally arrived back in Plymouth and

spent thirty days in getting clothes and being retrained for future duty. While serving at Plymouth I learned that Lt. (Jg.) Harlander had seen Mr. Hill after we were first hit. He was slightly wounded and was able to get away from the ship himself. That was the last time anyone seen him until he was identified in London.

Mr. Hill talked a great deal about you and his son but never mentioned much else. I could get from his talk that he had had a great time especially when he was younger. He wasn't sure about seeing anyone while in N.Y. and he was able to get me a forty eight hour pass after the order were in so that is the reason why I did not get to see his son. Maybe that time will come yet.

I was promised a list of addresses from Lt. Harlander but as yet I have not received them so to make sure I would like to get a list of the Engineer's group if that is possible. I have those of Mrs. Centell, whose son was in the Deck group, and Mrs. Halme, Parker, Cruz, Mann, Ackey and Jones. Any more would be most welcome.

If I get back I would like to visit his family if only for a few minutes and pay my respects for ~~for~~ serving under a 1st Class officer.

The others of the crew have paid the highest price

for freedom while I am still serving my time etc
but that I can. For them I admire and respect
but there is one that I would have given any
thing to have helped to save. of the entire group
I miss him most.

The medals that his wife has received are only
a token of in memory of him. May they be cherished.

This letter can only tell to a small degree
the loss that he caused. His loss could equally be
missed by the Navy as he is at home.

I shall send the picture soon and in the
meantime give my love to his son. I only hope
he is as good as his Dad.

When you get time just write a short letter to
us. We like to read them.

The sorrow that his death has caused should be
taken as his gift to the U.S. that I am sure would
be his wish.

So until I remain as before,

Sincerely yours
John A. Deane.