

the sea

between

Hawaii &

Guam

Constellations

Dec. 25, 1944

Dear Folks,

Merry Christmas! Ours is almost over, but not so yours, if my figuring is correct; and to think that you won't get this letter until next year!

I had a good laugh at myself early this morning, though not before enjoying a rather remarkable experience. Having vaguely planned to rise shortly before dawn and have a look for the Southern Cross, I woke at what seemed like about the right time and after looking at my wrist watch, which I thought said a little after six, got up. Up above I was disappointed to see lots of clouds and just a few unidentifiable stars peeping around them or, more dimly, through them. After a little, however, some of the clouds disappeared, and the constellations began to take shape. Yes, there was Orion and neighbors, which, incidentally, between them must contain nearly half of all the stars in the sky brighter than second magnitude. The question was, where was Corvus, since Crux, which had still not showed itself,

T. Rutledge

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should, as I remebered, be directly under the  
former. Well, Coma was finally located, but  
in such a position that Coma could only be  
very low on the horizon. I saw enough stars  
began to appear one by one in the right  
places as they got above the horizon here or  
out from behind the rapidly dispersing clouds,  
and finally there was the whole cross,  
though rather on its side, something like  
this: \* \* \* \* \* It still made a good  
Christmas \* \* \* \* \* present. High in the sky,  
upright and with no moon it must indeed  
be fine, though it could still hardly  
rival Orion, which, incidentally again, is  
almost exactly divided by the celestial  
equator, thus making the dipper the cross's  
rival up here (northern hemisphere). Well,  
I come at last to the laugh. Wondering  
at the slowness of Coma's approach and  
at my own unreflected state, I looked

again at my watch, and it read 2:45! 2:30 had looked like 6:10, though if it had actually been 6:10, dawn would very likely have already arrived, something I was in no mood, however, to stay up and check up on!

I agree wholeheartedly, Pa, that non-fiction has a great deal to offer. Autobiographical material seems to appeal to me most, and the three recent books of this sort recently read I've enjoyed very much. The first was Mansfield's "Strictly Personal," about his doing and rather keen observations in France at the beginning of the war. The second, "Under a Lucky Star," the autobiography of Roy Chapman Andrews, is one of the most entertaining and interesting books I've ever read. I vaguely remember his lecturing at C.S. many years ago. What was he like? He may have been a publicity seeker, but it was all for the cause of Science and The American Museum. He is indeed was a remarkable life

and enjoyed to the utmost. The book read almost like an Allen Quatermain. The third book, which I'd class as enjoyable, was "Land Below the Wind", an account of four years in Borneo of an American wife of a British "civil servant." Read any of these?

Stupidly I packed all my Xmas presents where they are at present unavailable, but I'll probably get to them before any of mine get to you. We had a little celebration here aboard ship, starting with a buffet supper last night (late) and winding up with a "Talent" show and then dinner <sup>(Thursday, etc.)</sup> to-day. Our squadron contributed more than its share, having several good voices (meaning better than mine - considerably) etc., but perhaps the most unusual performer was a sailor who could multiply up to a six digit number by a two digit number or carry a two digit number to the fourth power in his head in a matter of a few seconds!

T. Richards

Happy New Year! Hope to get a bundle of mail soon. Love T.