

First letter about  
Hawaii, Guam,  
and T.R. - just  
combat mission -

To an airfield south  
of Tokyo instead of  
Godasuba (from which  
we were diverted,  
supposedly because of  
poor weather)

March 25, 1945

Dear Folks,

I carelessly missed the last outgoing mail, which accounts for what will probably be an even longer interval than usual between my letters, one shamefully long I'm afraid. No mail has come in, as we've been pretty busy, but I'm very much hoping for a letter in the next day or two, when this should go out.

You may guess that we're afloat at last, which is substantially correct. Actually we've been at sea well over a month, and since a new censorship regulation permits mention of places visited more than a month ago, and especially as we've "been places" more than a month ago, it becomes worthwhile to mention these facts and mislead you, if I have <sup>been misleading you</sup> no longer. From now on I'll try to keep you posted to within thirty days of my writing, but in this will go very bad.

As you probably figured from my letter to Jack, we were based, while in the Hawaiian area, not on Oahu, but on the big island of Hawaii. Though we passed through the other and saw a bit of it. Our base was near Hilo, the next largest town in the islands though less than a tenth the size of

Honolulu. It is in on the rainy east<sup>2</sup> side of the island and nearly 200 miles from Honolulu, and while it is very rainy (140" yearly), flying is all right because the <sup>rain</sup> comes only in heavy showers, which can always be dodged or, if over the field, waited for. The town is remarkable for little else than its high proportion of Japanese-Americans, who, however, are entirely inoffensive even in a photograph studio!

The one big lead at Hawaii was beaches, and we did no swimming there at all. It was an interesting island to fly over, fascinating in fact. Mauna Loa, the still live volcano, and Mauna Kea, its slightly higher neighbor (13,800'±), each far too massive to climb except by making a major expedition, completely dominate the island. Though there are a couple of smaller peaks too. There was a bit of snow on Mauna Kea while we were there, and occasionally there is enough for skiing. Mauna Loa erupts every few years, but it did no more than steam a bit for us. The best place



to see volcanic activity in at Kilauea,<sup>3</sup>  
a huge crater on a lower slope of Mauna  
Loa and the main attraction of Hawaii  
Nat'l Park. Here also are some fine  
forests, interesting for tree ferns and also  
a retreat for the now mostly rare native  
birds. The majority of these belong to one  
family restricted to Hawaii, remarkable  
for their diversity of bill development, and  
few of which I saw; but most are either  
rare or extinct, not having been able to  
compete with introduced birds in a  
changing environment. What I enjoyed  
perhaps most of all was flying over the  
gorge near the north tip of the island,  
where there are the most beautiful  
waterfalls I've ever seen.

Well, from there we went to Guam,  
which was less interesting though nice  
for swimming. Gone were the cool nights  
of Hilo, and the food was pretty sad,  
but the scenery is pleasant, and there  
were of course new birds to see. Nearby  
Rota was the first enemy territory we  
saw, but it's pretty unimportant and  
neutralized at that, and to us it was

just an island in the distance.

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After that we went to our ship, which has turned out to be a grand one. It certainly is an experience to be based on a big, efficient carrier, and a mighty interesting one too. By a strange coincidence I was ushered into the Thirties amid very unusual circumstances - my first attack and the first ever made on Japan proper by carrier-based planes, not counting, though not belittling, Doolittle's achievement with carrier-launched, but ~~not~~ <sup>harder</sup> carrier-based planes, despite his name. Yes, there was Fuji, a beautiful mountain indeed and all covered with snow, as were many of her (?) lesser neighbors. Our particular "strike" didn't hit Tokyo and indeed was a small part of the show, but we did drop some bombs and do some damage. I was amazed to see how little of Japan is low and flat and cultivated compared with the mountainous areas. We also were in at Iwo, having an even smaller share there, however. More

about carrier life next time. Love Toot