

Dear Folks

I don't feel too ambitious today so instead of writing a long letter telling you how much I miss you and how I wish I were home, I shall send you one of these horrible form letters, which will tell you of the doings of the "TERRIBLE TAYLOR". These letters are blessed by the censor as he need not read them. However, I'm sure you understand that anything done by the TAYLOR is done partly by me and if the TAYLOR is successful in her missions then I have done my work well.

In my last letter an attempt was made to picture some of the horrors of war by describing Manila and with the taste and smell of Manila still fresh to us we were assigned to a light task force, which was to aid in wrenching the island of Borneo from our formerly aggressive enemy. The aggressiveness of the Jap is past, and now, in vain, he is attempting to defend or destroy his stolen possessions. But to get to my story. Our immediate objective in Borneo was the pear shaped island of Tarakan. Prior to this operation I had never given Borneo a thought. The only time I remember hearing about it was in reference to the "Wild Man of Borneo". But even in the early predawn hours of "D" minus four day the reasons for liberating Borneo and Tarakan were apparent. Long before we saw Tarakan we were able to see huge fires and mountains of smoke as the Japs feverishly set fire to countless gallons of the world's richest natural fuel oil. During the entire operation the fires burned furiously.

Enroute to Tarakan one event of interest occurred. As we neared Tawi Tawi we spotted a small raft in the water with five Japs on it. We were ordered to take these Japs prisoners. The task may sound simple, but taking a Jap prisoner is a major achievement. For he may commit suicide, or he may attempt to come aboard with hand grenades concealed on his person, or he may refuse to come aboard and then we would have no alternative but to exterminate him. Well, these five Japs were interested in living, so after pleading with them they were finally induced to swim to the ship, one by one. They had all their worldly possessions on the raft with a number of hand grenades attached to them. The prisoners included a Japanese doctor and four pharmacist's mates. They were pitiful looking specimens of the human race, but one could not help but admire their coolness and the erect manner of carrying themselves. In no time at all in typical American fashion we were feeding them candy and cigarettes. To me that sure was symbolic of the American attitude, an enemy we can eliminate with ease but as soon as he becomes friendly, well, we would gladly give him anything he desires. The prisoners were transferred to one of the cruisers several hours after capture.

The first three days of the operation were spent in guarding the tiny mine sweeps as they patiently and daringly swept the channel leading to the inner bay. These boats are the first to clear the path for the ships and troops to follow. As soon as they swept an area the "Cans" would follow and bombard the beach. During these days if the Japs had any Navy or Air Force they remained in their holes, just as can be expected of rats.

On the morning of "D" day the TAYLOR with one other destroyer was designated to lead the way for the mighty armada which was to invade Tarakan. Due to the uncertainty of enemy forces and enemy mines on the southern tip of Tarakan, at the last moment it was decided to take an alternate route which was difficult due to navigational hazards.



If the destroyers leading the parade had made an error in navigation then the landing might well have been held up, but the TAYLOR took the task in her usual stride and the troopships were in position to disembark troops not only on time but a few minutes ahead of schedule.

To go into detail would necessitate a book on amphibious operations. In this operation we were in a position to watch the troops as they hit the beach. The troops were units of the Australian Army. It is indeed a marvel to watch all the hell and fury of the Navy break loose as tons of shells are fired at a landing beach prior to invasion. When the troops landed there is no doubt that the beach was cleared of living Japs. The Taylor expended her share of projectiles in shore bombardment. Immediately after the landing, Taylor lookouts spotted one of the few enemy boats in the area. This was a large enemy motor launch which was hidden along the beach. Two salvos and this launch joined the majority of the Japanese Navy.

During the rest of the operation all hands were on the alert for the revealing flash of enemy guns, which looks like a match being struck in the distance. Only one was spotted and naturally was eliminated. As soon as the major objectives were secured by the "Aussies" the Taylor was detached from the operation and returned to the "home" base at Subic Bay, Luzon, P.I.

With the exception of a four-day recreation trip to Manila the rest of the month of May was a quiet month spent in port. The trip to Manila was enjoyable, even though liberty was up at 1700. Just roaming through the streets, watching the people, buying cheap souvenirs and being gyped by the natives is a welcome relief from the wholesome (but boring) life aboard ship.

This operation completed our duty with the Seventh Fleet and we were soon to return to the "big leagues", but that will come in a later letter. As a final gesture, while with the Seventh Fleet the crew of this vessel, as if their actions were not enough, purchased \$14,000 worth of War Bonds!

Now I will show you I have some ambition and sign my name to this letter.

*Louie  
Gerry*

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