

EXCERPTS OF LETTERS FROM HENRY EARL MILLINER IN 1962 & 1963

(While sorting through old files on a cold November day in 2020, Frank Olderr rediscovered copies of letters Henry Earl wrote to his family, and sent to Frank years ago. Sad to say, Henry Earl died in 2019.)

Henry Earl wrote the following in June 1962 “from somewhere at sea on the Collett.” Two days after he arrived at the receiving station in Yokosuka, Japan “at about noon the next day we flew out of Atsugi to the USS Bennington (CVS-20). That business of landing on a carrier is quite the thing. It scared the guy next to me almost silly. We hit the deck and everything was rushing by and then we hear the most god-awful noise as the arresting wires grabbed on. If you have ever seen a monkey on a string you can imagine just how he looked. His arms and feet and everything else not tied down was flapping in the breeze. I got to spend the afternoon and night aboard the carrier. The next morning I went running all over the carrier trying to get them to transfer me to the Collett. I finally succeeded and they flew me over by ’copter. The sea was pretty bad and the Collett was bouncing all over the place. To top it off there was a 35 knot wind. I had to jump out of the ’copter and dangle on the end of the cable. It took about 5 minutes to get down. Every time it looked as though I’d get down, the bottom would drop out from under the ship and I’d be 45 to 50 feet above it. What was worse though was to get just a few feet from the deck and then start across it in pendulum fashion. I finally got down all right and it seemed as though the whole ship turned out to meet me. It seems as though I’m the only one who has ever come about that way.” ... “When you see the almost fantastic scenes in Victory At Sea or some other such program, believe it for it is true. We have been bounced everyway conceivable since I came aboard. All day today, I think we’ve been going over one and under two just like in knitting. They put me directly in the ET Shop and seemed delighted to have another one aboard as it is now, there are only 2 of us that know anything about radar ... Coming in the way I did made me somewhat of a celebrity. All the officers wanted to know how I rated such special treatment. Some of them had tried to do it that way in the past but were unable to. We just highlined a Japanese officer aboard from the Swenson. He got a little wet coming across. As the two ships plow through the water, they create some pretty big waves and when these waves meet in the middle –swish up goes a tremendous plume of water. I’m glad they didn’t elect to send me aboard in that fashion. Seafaring would be all right if it concerned only rolling but when they toss in so much pitching and yawing, it gets rough to keep your equilibrium.”

Henry Earl wrote the following in June 1963 from “two miles off the coast of Korea” about a war exercise: “We have been operating with the Marines in an amphibious operation for the last couple of weeks. All the way to Korea at 10 knots. To top it off, we were chased all over the Sea of Japan by Typhoon Shirley. At one point we were 150 miles from Vladivostok or 110 miles from the nearest point of Siberia. That night we turned around and headed into Shirley. It had dissipated some and so was not too rough even though we passed through the eye. For a week though, visibility was so bad that the [bridge] lookouts could not see the bow, and sometimes Mt 52 was completely obscured. The day we passed though Shirley it finally cleared and the sun came out. With the sun came a Russian Badger bomber (side #52) to see what the heck an invasion group was doing that near home. It circled overhead for about 15 minutes and then headed for home. We landed the marines twice. Once in rehearsal and the next day we put

them ashore for the duration of the exercise. You should have seen the area. Once, I had the [radar] scope turned down to a 2 mile radius and in that area I counted 65 ships. All together on an approximately one-mile stretch of beach there were 150 landing craft, so this is a pretty big exercise. It also has been quite complex. We have gone through simulated minefields. Air attacks all day long. Submarines day and night. Underwater demolition teams at night. Fire support day and night. All of us in Combat were standing port and starboard watches. Pretty hectic but it has been fun.” (*Frank Olderr sorted through old files recently and found copies of letters Henry Earl wrote to his family, and sent to Frank years ago. Henry Earl died in 2019.*)

Henry Earl Milliner (62-63, ETR3) wrote home in June 1962 “from somewhere at sea on the Collett.” Two days after he arrived at the receiving station in Yokosuka, Japan “at about noon the next day we flew out of Atsugi to the USS Bennington (CVS-20). That business of landing on a carrier is quite the thing. It scared the guy next to me almost silly. We hit the deck and everything was rushing by and then we hear the most god-awful noise as the arresting wires grabbed on. If you have ever seen a monkey on a string you can imagine just how he looked. His arms and feet and everything else not tied down was flapping in the breeze. I got to spend the afternoon and night aboard the carrier. The next morning I went running all over the carrier trying to get them to transfer me to the Collett. I finally succeeded and they flew me over by ’copter. The sea was pretty bad and the Collett was bouncing all over the place. To top it off there was a 35 knot wind. I had to jump out of the ’copter and dangle on the end of the cable. It took about 5 minutes to get down. Every time it looked as though I’d get down, the bottom would drop out from under the ship and I’d be 45 to 50 feet above it. What was worse though was to get just a few feet from the deck and then start across it in pendulum fashion. I finally got down all right and it seemed as though the whole ship turned out to meet me. It seems as though I’m the only one who has ever come about that way.” ... “When you see the almost fantastic scenes in *Victory At Sea* or some other such program, believe it for it is true. We have been bounced everyway conceivable since I came aboard. All day today, I think we’ve been going over one and under two just like in knitting. They put me directly in the ET Shop and seemed delighted to have another one aboard as it is now, there are only 2 of us that know anything about radar ... Coming in the way I did made me somewhat of a celebrity. All the officers wanted to know how I rated such special treatment. Some of them had tried to do it that way in the past but were unable to. We just highlined a Japanese officer aboard from the *Swenson*. He got a little wet coming across. As the two ships plow through the water, they create some pretty big waves and when these waves meet in the middle –swish up goes a tremendous plume of water. I’m glad they didn’t elect to send me aboard in that fashion. Seafaring would be all right if it concerned only rolling but when they toss in so much pitching and yawing, it gets rough to keep your equilibrium.”